

Walter M. Snyder
589th Field Artillery / Battery A
Stalag 12-C



Basic Training at Fort Jackson, SC, 1943



Walter Snyder is Prisoner in Eastern Reich

Springdale Man writes to Mother from **Stalag VIII-C**. First time since reported missing December 17.

First word was received Saturday by Mrs. Edith Montgomery Snyder of Orchard Street, Springdale, from her son, Cpl Walter Snyder who was a prisoner of war in Germany at Stalag VIII-C near Sagan in the eastern part of Germany at the time he wrote the card on February 6. Previously Cpl Snyder has been listed as missing in action on December 17, 1944 with the 106th Division during the Ardennes bulge offensive.

Although the area has been overrun by the Russians where he is imprisoned, no further word has been received by Mrs. Snyder.

On the postcard Cpl Snyder wrote "Am still OK and thinking of you and the family and food all the time. Am hoping this will be over soon and that once again we may be reunited. Am definitely going to be a stay-at-home. Got a lot of recipes to try out. Be sure and let me know how sis is getting along and the boys and above all, don't worry." Signed, Walter.

In service two years, Cpl Snyder received training at Fort Jackson, S. C. and Camp

Atterbury, Ind., prior to embarking for overseas duty in November 1944.

Two brothers also in service are Storekeeper Third Class Richard M. Snyder with the U. S. Navy at Berkley, Calif., and Pfc Harry R. Snyder in Germany. Mrs. Snyder is executive secretary of the New Kensington chapter of the American Red Cross.

WALTER M. SNYDER

Today is Tuesday, September 13, 2005 and we are at the Dundalk Historical Society with Mr. Walter M. Snyder. Mr. Snyder is 81, born December 11, 1923. He served in the United States Army in WW 2 and my name is Barbara Ptirkey.

Barbara: Could you start by telling us where you were born and raised?

Mr.: I was born in Montreal back in 1923. My Father was an engineer working both in Canada and the United States o in the earlier years, we moved around to several cities. Basically, however, when I was about five years old, we came back to my Mother's home town which was a little community called Springdale, Pennsylvania about 30 miles north of Pittsburgh up the Allegheny River. That is where I went to school, Springdale Elementary, Junior and Senior High School, graduated there in 1942, 6`r in a class of 200. I enjoyed school very much. For a year before being drafted in the Army, I worked in a factory in Oakmont, Pennsylvania that made bombs. I was drafted and came on down to Fort Meade to be processed and then headed to Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

Barbara: You did your basic training in Fort Meade. Is that correct?

Mr.: No, basic training was in Fort Jackson. Fort Meade was where they processed you for 2 or 3 days, gave you certain tests and interviewed you. I think what they were trying to do, was to set up a new Division called the 106th Division and they had a lot of young men coming from the Central and East Coast. They were giving tests to say, "Ok, this one goes to the Infantry, this one to Engineers." I happened to end up in the Field Artillery.

Barbara: What was your parent's response to your going into the Army?

Mr.: Well my Father was not there. He had walked out on my Mother during the depression years. My Mother was already used to it because my older brother was in the Infantry and my younger brother was in the Navy. At that time, if you recall, anyone that was the least bit healthy had joined the service or was drafted.

Barbara: So it was expected.

Mr.: Sort of expected. I was afraid that I would not be drafted because I only weighed 137 pounds and I was 6 foot tall and I always remember when I was worried about it, my Great Grandmother saying, "Walter, take a lean horse for a long run." So the Military did take me and I was certainly glad to be a part of it because everyone from my little town was gone. People that I had grown up with were all in the service, etc.

Barbara: Then you went to Fort Jackson for Basic Training?

Mr.: Fort Jackson for Basic Training. We were a totally new division so it was Officers and enlisted men that had been brought in from other Military Units but we were starting from scratch. It was very interesting with all the different kinds of training that we did. I was glad to be in the field Artillery. I wasn't working the guns, I was something called Scout Corporal working with the Officer who was responsible for the men and the gun crews, firing experiences and so forth. For a number of months, we trained at Fort Jackson. We went to Mufreesboro, Tennessee for several weeks out in the field and moved up to Camp Atterbury because hundreds of our people had been taken out of our Division and sent to Europe where they were needed as filling for casualties in other military divisions. We returned to Camp Atterbury in the late fall of '45. We moved out to England for a short period of time and moved out by boat to LeHarve and then by Military Transportation to the front lines which was where the Battle of the Bulge began. Barbara: Were you in the Battle of the Bulge?
Mr.: Yes, that is where I was located and captured.

Barbara: If I remember, there was a Pennsylvania Group that was involved in the Battle of the Bulge.

Mr.: There were many thousands of people. For instance, a typical division has close to fifteen thousand in that division. So when we were talking about 106th Division, we were talking about hundreds upon hundreds of people in the Infantry, in the Field Artillery, in the Engineers and Communications, etc. We were on a front line that was expected to be very quiet, spread much too thin, very limited ammunition and we were really not provided with winter attire such as gloves, heavy jackets, boots and everything else like that.

Barbara: 1-how did that happen? They sort of knew about the weather, didn't they?

Mr.: It fell short because top leadership was probably planning to bring up more ammunition and better clothing and everything like that but there was no particular necessity to hurry up because no one thought the Germans would come through the Ardennes Forrest. There have been a few clues of what was going on but it was not correctly interpreted by our Military. All at once these massive Germany Armies broke through a totally green organization with little ammunition and very limited experience.

Barbara: Green, meaning the 106th?

Mr.: Yeah, young and having only trained in the States and having no experience of being fired on by the enemy.

Barbara: Right, right.

Mr.: Many were killed and even more were captured because the Germans were coming in tanks and all levels of machine guns, mortars and that sort of stuff. What little we had, we utilized, withdrew and thousands were surrounded and taken as Prisoners of War.

Barbara: So that was when you were taken.

Mr.: That is where I was taken prisoner, yes, just before the Christmas Holiday. It was not much of a Christmas gift.

Barbara: I guess not. So you were with other men in your group when you were taken.

Mr.: Oh, yes.

Barbara: What was it like, the first day, when you knew you were a prisoner?

Mr.: Well, we were frightened because we did not know what to expect. Different groups were taken to different areas to be processed. It was interesting. One of the things the Germans did was to line us up to check to see if you had a wrist watch. If you did, they stole it. Fortunately, being only 137 pounds of "romping, stomping, dynamite", when they pushed my sleeve up to see if I had a wrist watch on, which I did, my arm was so skinny the watch went up the arm at the same time and they missed it. That was good for me because when I was a POW, it was possible to trade off a wrist watch with the German Guards for some frozen potatoes and a little bit of brown bread, which we did. The only reason I had a wrist watch was because one of my officers had two and he said, "Here Walter, take one of my Army wrist watches." So you know the Gods were kind. In talking about POW experiences, six pages that I provided you with gives you a day by day, sort of a writing of the experiences about the time I was captured and the time I got back to the States.

Barbara: Well, do you want to talk about some of those? The most memorable experiences. I guess first, it is an experience obviously; they sort of marched someplace or put you on a train someplace. Where did they send you?

Mr.: Well the first camp I was in was called Lindberg. Prior to being assigned there, some of us were interviewed by some Germans.

Barbara: They wanted information.

Mr.: That is right! They wanted information which I think I was interviewed because my name is Snyder, which is somewhat like Schnieder and that could indicate a German background. The man was dressed in handsome clothes, very articulate in English and asked me some background information. Me, being young and brash, said, "Don't you Germans know you have lost the war?"

Barbara: Oh my, you told him that?

Mr.: It was interesting when he said, "Yes we do but we are going to continue to fight until the end. We will not give into unconditional surrender which is what your President is demanding. In sharing this with friends later on, they said, "Snyder, you are damn lucky he didn't just put you up against the wall and shoot you."

Barbara: Yeah!

Mr.: We were sent to a Camp, Lindberg and hundreds of people were jammed in limited areas. They separated Officers from enlisted men. Just before Christmas, the Camp was bombed at night. Barbara: Our people bombed it.

Mr.: I don't know if it was American Bombers or British Bombers. I think what had occurred, the Camp should never have been close to a railroad yard but the Germans ignored that. A wing of the Camp was hit and I think about 67 American Officers were killed, including one of my favorite Officers. We had to help go into that area and pick up parts of bodies. What they did was just take a group of POW's and say, "Ok, we want you to do this type of work." It was very traumatic. Barbara: I guess it was.

Mr.: Eventually we left that Camp and spent most of our time in Camp Hammelberg. That included being in a box car for three days, jammed in because there was not enough room to sit down, no food, freezing conditions and so forth. "That is where I got frozen feet and hands. We moved very slowly because other German Trains with tanks and ammunitions and so forth were being shuttled around Germany and that was a higher priority. Hammelberg was a very large Camp and it is mentioned in those cards.

Barbara: What does the Camp look like? Give us a picture, what quarters are like, how big a space you are in, how many men and where you were sleeping.

Mr.: Hammelberg, I think, was some kind of a training facility probably for horses. We were in great big barracks. If you could picture in your mind a metal bed, with one on top of the other. Each bunk had to sleep two people, they weren't much more than a yard and a half wide. Then, 4 sets of those kinds of bunks were pushed together so in a radius of about 3 or 4 yards, 16 people were assigned.

Barbara: Wow, that was very tight!

Mr.: Very tight!! It was just enough room to get in and out. Each person was issued a dirty mat full of lice and a kind of thin blanket.

Barbara: And this is very cold.

Mr.: That is right. There was some very limited heat; it wasn't the terrible cold suffered in the box cars. We were very regimented as to what time you got up and what time you went out and were counted, what time you received horrible cabbage soup, perhaps some potatoes that had been frozen and some horrible tasting brown bread and a lousy tasting coffee. The diet was terrible. I was 137 pounds and went down to probably 100 pounds.

Barbara: They would sort of blow a whistle to wake you guys up, a specific time?

Mr.: Oh, yeah!

Barbara: Did you have jobs to do that they made you do?

Mr. Snyder: Most of the time, no. Occasionally, they would send a group or two out to collect some cuttings, wood and everything like that. It was used to provide a little bit of heat. You have to realize that some of these encampments may have had 50 to 60 thousand men and they weren't all Americans. Some were Russians, Poles and English.

Barbara: They separated them?

Mr.: They separated them and the Officers from the enlisted men.

Barbara: I talked to one gentleman who was in a Prison Camp but it was a working farm and they worked on a farm.

Mr.: Aid to POW's changed drastically in the last 7 or 8 months of the war. Germany was being bombed horrendously and we were a low priority as to who was being taken care of and everything like that. This was especially true of the care provided Air Force People who had been in Prison Camps 4 or 5 years. They had been shot down and some of those

Camps had library facilities, a little music and were treated more humanly than in the fading months of the war, just like we treated the Italian and German Prisoners that had been sent over here to the United States. A lot of them were living high off the hog compared to the conditions if they were on the firing lines in Germany or Italy.

Barbara: So what about mail and so forth. Did you have access to mail from home?

Mr. Snyder: We weren't receiving any type of mail. They would bring in some little white cards to write about 50 or 60 words on them. As I understand, these white cards were provided to the American Red Cross and the Red Cross made accommodations to have them mailed. In my book if you want to make copies of some of them, they were eventually received. I was amazed! Another thing, back when I told about the things they took, they took your wallet and also took any money that we had. They wrote a little receipt. When I got out of the service, it was possible to send this receipt to some United States Governmental organization and I eventually received a check for sixty or seventy dollars which the receipt indicated had been taken from my wallet.

Barbara: Isn't that interesting! So they had to pay people back. I wonder if, well I guess the watches were never returned. You all had a lot of time on your hands, what would the guys do to sort of pass the time away?

Mr.: We would talk and talk mainly about food. You would think all those guys would be talking about their girl friends, women and all of that sort of stuff. When you are hungry and totally insecure, you just cannot imagine how you walked by a bakery! Guys would have on their jackets, etc, favorite foods and recipes.

Barbara: I have heard about recipes.

Mr.: Yeah, yeah, because you were continuously hungry and continuously losing weight. I think I had, I was a POW, a little over five months; one shower in 5 months. We would sit there talking about many things while searching our clothes and breaking lice and killing lice. Many of us had sores on our bodies because the lack of food and everything and was not strong enough to break the infections from the lice. You get used to people's odors, dirty clothes and all that sort of thing.

Barbara: Did you have any kind of facilities where you could cook anything _just in case you got any potatoes?

Mr.: No, we had none of that. Not in the Camps where we were, although when in Neusberg, the last Camp that I was in, things became more flexible as to doing outside cooking because the war was winding down and the Germans were retreating and all of that. The only food that we received was from the Germans or occasionally, there might be a Red Cross Box that became available. According to the Geneva Conference, each POW was supposed to be guaranteed one Red Cross Box a month. That would include vitamins, toothpaste, tooth brushes, powdered milk, chocolate, cigarettes and stuff like that. I think once or twice, our boxes came through, but had to be divided up around eight people. Cigarettes, by the way, were more valuable than money.

Barbara: Because there was such large numbers that they had there.

Mr.: The food was so rich. If you were not careful, your stomach could not handle it. Let me tell you something that was interesting to me. The latrine facilities were somewhat limited but in the main Camp there was a great round building as a latrine. If we had to

urinate, you would just do so over a side. If you had to pass, diarrhea, you would just set your fanny over the side and just let go. The thing that was interesting was, every week the Germans came in and drained that pool. There were certain acids that they could separate from the urine that could be converted into military use, possibly for ammunition or fuel or something. The Germans were very alert and they used everything. That was the first time I had ever seen any diesel because their trucks would come by and the dirty diesel black would be coming out the smoke stacks or whatever they were.

Barbara: Yeah, that is what I am thinking.

Mr.: Hours would go by. Two or 3 times a day you would be called and lined up to be counted. Outside of sleeping, watching and talking, there was nothing to do. There were all different kinds of Camps and depending upon the leadership of the Camps, some people were treated more horribly than others. The Political Camps were where they killed people, gassed people but seldom POW's. I think it was political or ethnic types of prisoners.

Barbara: So you were not really in fear that anything would happen to you?

Mr.: No, I didn't. There were certain Camps where people tried to escape but we were not aware of it and too huge a gathering of people crammed into such a small area. Sometime the most dangerous people to be around were the other people in the camp.

Barbara: For what they might do?

Mr.: What they might do. There was always someone who was crooked. If you were not careful and alert enough, while you were asleep someone could cut your wristwatch off without you even knowing it. I indicated that my wristwatch was valuable and I shared a bed with a guy from the 101st. Infantry Division. He too had a watch and being a wheeler-dealer, he was able to change our watches for a little extra food. Therefore, the bread and potatoes we got, probably worth 17 cents, had to be protected. We stayed close to our bed because that is where we kept our food under the blanket, etc. So, except when everyone was called to duty to be counted, one or the other would be with our food to protect it.

Barbara: Wow! So you made that food last awhile.

Mr.: But we were always hungry.

Barbara: Yeah, that is what I was told.

Mr.: I had never heard of chilling a banana and covering it with hot fudge and sprinkling it with coconut. That was one of the things I said, "When I get out, I am going to eat one of those because it sounds so delicious." I never did!

Barbara: You were fantasizing about that.

Mr.: That's right. It was very interesting when we were released. The first thing that they did was to de-lice us. Everything that we wore had to be destroyed. We took hot showers and received new clothes. Then they had to be very careful in the first week of how much and how rich they fed us.

Barbara: Gradually.

Mr.: Right.

Barbara: Tell me about the day the war was over. How did you get that information?

Mr.: By the last week or so, someone had a radio. Whether or not they got little pieces, always technical people who knew how to put the pieces together, there was that radio information that was discussed and we could hear bombing in the back ground. We could see flights of our planes going over to bomb other cities, etc. At one Camp, I remember the German Rockets that went over and bombed London. This was towards the end of the war. The Germans had developed these rockets that flew and you could hear them go roaring over the Camps. They might be traveling hundreds of miles and were very destructive.

Barbara: So you had a radio. I would imagine that rumors would go around Camp.

Mr.: Always rumors.

Barbara: What was something that you might remember in terms of rumors that went around? Mr.: Well, in Hammelberg, where we were the longest, we heard but did not know what it was all about. It was the roar of gun fire in a part of the Camp. We heard that American Troops had come in and tried to release the POW's at the Camp. It was true! Patton had sent a small group, not knowing how massive the Camp was, to try, at least according to the rumor, release, I think, his son in law. Well we didn't know what happened or anything except when we were being moved out of Hammelburg to take us to Nuremberg, there was an indication of some American bodies lying along the side of the streets, dead. There was no doubt, been a battle and in the Historical books, this is written up as far as I am concerned. We really did not know only that the name of Patton had infiltrated through the group. It was a big hope that we were soon to be released. We weren't, but moved deeper into Germany. This occurred towards the end of the war.

Barbara: I can imagine how that was, it sort of gave you hope.

Mr.: Sure, sure. Let me tell you of another incident. Apparently, because I was at Hammelberg the longest, some of these stories would relate to that. Certain Sgts were used by the Germans to run various aspects of the Camp. When we were being processed at the end of the war before being shipped back to the States, we were questioned if we knew any of these Sgts. or knew anything about them. The story was that they would sell, when the Red Cross Boxes arrived, to the Germans. The Germans were having trouble getting food and everything like that and the Germans were paying them out of the money that they took from the prisoners. There are always some people that are going to be greedy and shady. Now, I never was a smoker, and it really did not mean anything to me but cigarettes were gold. There were always people that had cigarettes and they could wheel and deal whenever they got it from the Germans or whatever it might be. We just did not know what we know about tobacco now and the tragic thing was that there were people that needed cigarettes so desperately that they would trade their food off for cigarettes. I know from one of the Camps, those type of people had to be carried out on stretchers.

Barbara: I guess so, I mean serious malnutrition. That is a shame. I have heard some people say that they never started smoking until they went into the service; it was almost like it was issued to you.

Mr.: Well, they were very inexpensive and people enjoyed them. I don't get any Halo, I was just lucky. My brother and sister, two out of four of us, are smokers.

Barbara: Tell us more about after the war was over and you were to be released and how did all of that take place.

Mr.: Well, I came home and I guess, about 60 days at home. Being a POW, the Military sent you *for* 2 weeks of R&R and it could have been Lake Placid or Miami, Florida.

Barbara: Was it your choosing or what?

Mr.: They said this is where you are going. When you were there, you were wined and dined, slept in nice Hotels and everything like that. You would have physicals and some counseling and everything like that. Then they would get you ready to send you some other places. Barbara: Right because Japan was still out there.

Mr.: What?

Barbara: We hadn't won over Japan yet.

Mr.: They invited me to stay there and work in the Processing Center because I had typing skills. I did that and it was great and eventually there were few POW's coming in from Europe because by then, the war had stopped and they were getting ready now to take care of the POW's that were coming in from Japan and everything like that. I was moved up to Indiantown Gap. Some people would say I did a very foolish thing because I re-enlisted.

Barbara: Why did you do that?

Mr.: I wish I had asked my Mom in later years what her reaction was. Being in the Military never bothered me. I was first one up in the morning, my bed was always perfect, no dust underneath my bed, my foot locker was always in order, etc. At that point, I was ready to return. Once I did that, I was assigned to recruitment duty and stationed in Norton, Virginia, way back in the hills, Big Stone Gap, Coburn. I was the clerk for the office. There were 4 or 5 recruiters and a Lt. in charge of the office. By the end of that year, I was ready, taking some English Courses to revitalize my skills, correspondence courses and so forth. There was a teacher where I was living and he said, "Walter, why don't you just talk to Ms. Blankenship, I think that was her name, and see if you can't go tip to the High School and during the lunch hour you could take some English courses with the kids. 'So everyday I went up and took High School English again. Refresh. It wasn't as much as I needed it so much because I was a decent student in High School and once again it was good for me because I was reconstituting my thinking and interest in returning to civilian life. Barbara: Right, what am I going to do.

Mr.: Well, I knew by then there was the GI Bill and was planning to be a teacher. I always wanted to be a teacher since the 7th grade but never thought I could afford it; where was I ever going to get the money to go to College. It was the depression in those days, etc.

Barbara: You said before that your Morn worked for the Red Cross. Tell us a little about that.

Mr.: My Mother was a very interesting person, very lovely, very attractive. In her late teens she had been in some movies but not big parts. She also had this great ability to

play the piano without reading notes or anything. You heard something and Morn could play it for you. When she was in High School, she earned money by playing piano at the movies, those days were no talkies. In the background you would have one indicating like joy, laughter, spookie or something like that. My Mother of all things, joined the Marines.

Barbara: Oh, she was a Marine.

Mr.: She was a secretary for the last 6 months of WWI. WWII representative hearing about this wanted her to come back as a Colonel. Mother was only a Private but you know with good PR and everything like that. By then she was the Red Cross Director in New Kensington, Pennsylvania and to her, that was more important. She set up a blood program and different types of things and programs that were very, very highly appreciated. Unfortunately she was living in a little town and didn't have much choice with 4 kids and a husband that had left her. She came back to a little town and worked a place called Silvennan's that sold women's dresses, yarn and all that sort of stuff.

Barbara: Was that after the war?

Mr.: It was during, oh, I am sorry, it was before and eventually she got into the Red Cross. Barbara: Ok. During the war, she worked for the Red Cross.

Mr.: My sister was the youngest, in High School and my Mom had 3 sons in the Military.

Barbara: So when she got word of your missing in action, being in the Red Cross, did that help her finding out about you?

Mr.: No, all I know is that when the first POW card came through I think the head of the Post Office had told Mother if anything arrived for her, he would handle it.

Barbara: She got the standard telegram and we have a copy of that. How long after that telegram did she find out you were OK? Do you have a sense of that? Do you know?

Mr.: Not really except the very fact that she received the card that indicated at least I was alive in a POW Camp.

Barbara: Right! I was wondering how long a time between the telegram and that card. Did she go for a long time before she knew?

Mr.: Lets see, I was captured on December 17th and I would have imagined the card would have come through in March.

Barbara: Ok. So a couple of months she was wondering about you. You had a couple of brothers in the service; one in the Army and one in the Navy. How did they make out?

Mr.: In fact, my brother I-Larry, after the war was called back for Korea as an enlisted man. The other, brother Richard, I don't know what the nautical term was, possibly Store Keeper, did paper work in handing out supplies and all that sort of stuff. He wanted to get in the activities but he ended up in the University of North Carolina totally frustrated that he was not on the front lines. He was transferred to a boat and never left the wharf in New Your City and he kept complaining about going to the theatre and all this sort of cultural stuff.

Barbara: He really wanted to be where the action was.

Mr.: He did. Before he got out, he was a part of the Bikini Atomic Program assigned to a ship in the South Pacific.

Barbara: That group. I talked to one of the gentlemen who was there.

Mr.: You will never believe what that brother turned out to be.

Barbara: What is that?

Mr.: A Black Jack Dealer in Las Vegas.

Barbara: Oh my goodness!

Mr.: He went out to Las Vegas in his last year of College. The town had only 30,000 people around 1950. Now, of course, they are working on their second million. He always loved gambling and show business so what better place to go!

Barbara: That sounds exciting. We are about finished the first side of this tape.

Mr.: I am probably talking too much.

Barbara: No, we have another side. We are talking about the war and you decided to go to College. Mr.: Well, I lived at home and decided I wanted to go to the University of Pittsburgh which was a 45 minute ride on the bus. I was very young and I started at the University of Pittsburgh in February of '47 and by August, 1950 I had completed both my Bachelor and Master Degrees.

Barbara: You were quick!

Mr.: Sometime I would take 17 or 19 credits where some people take about 15, I enjoyed College. I was President of the Military Organization called Scabbard and Blade which is a National Organization. I also was President of an Educational Organization. So I kept busy, made pretty good grades and graduated trained to be a teacher. Soon I was looking for a job in Pennsylvania. Each little town has their own school board, their own superintendent and everything like that. They might only have 2 or 3 vacancies coming up, maybe none in that business. My mentor told me there was someone from Baltimore County interviewing for teachers; why didn't I sit in on one of the interviews. I did. She was interviewing 5 people at a time because in those days Baltimore County was growing so rapidly they needed about 600 new teachers. To me, this was almost unbelievable. So I got the information and said, "Oh, they are too good, you'll never get the job with them." Well, not being successful of finding anything in the Pittsburgh area, I mailed in an application and I was offered a job. I was a good candidate because I could teach business, English and Social Studies. The Baltimore County Board of Education sent me an assignment to teach in some strange community called Dundalk. Not having a car, I came down here by bus, I asked the bus driver where Dundalk Junior, Senior High School was. He told me that when I got off of the bus at the corner to turn left. Well, when I got off at the corner, I went to the right since there was a school there. I thought the bus driver did not know what he was talking about. So I went and knocked on the door of the Elementary School and they sent me further up the street. Compared to where I graduated from, the Dundalk Junior, Senior High School was quite modern and handsome. I accepted the job there and had great students. In those days, maybe the

wildest thing they did was to sneak a cigarette or a beer. They were polite and willing to learn. Another fellow and I were asked to take over the class of 1952 and be their sponsors. We said, yes. I worked closely with kids, had the cheer leaders and so forth. The best friend of my sisters was at Harvard University working on a Master's Degree. He said, "Walter, they are starting a new Doctoral Program up there and why don't you apply for it?" I didn't even know where Harvard was located. He forwarded the information to me and I told my supervisor and he said, "Walter, you are going up for an interview. There is a National Convention in Business Education in Boston and I am going to drive you up there and you can stay with me up there. You are going to get an interview at Harvard."

Barbara: How exciting!

Mr.: Yeah. I was accepted. I didn't have a penny in the world. My friend, Bev Bailey who sent me the application, told me about an organization that had a grant and they give you plenty of time to pay it back; Baltimore County had no type of leave program. The Board of Education let me go on an academic leave and be able to come back. So I went up there and worked in the program, educational administration. It had a great type of program and a creative philosophy. Instead of writing a formal type of Doctoral Dissertation, the philosophy of that program was to work with a school system that had a particular need around this. You would build a project related to the school system in the community rather than some type of exotic study.

Barbara: So this is real practical hands on.

Mr.: Yes. There were about 40 of us in the program. Some from Canada, Chicago, Philadelphia and there is little Walter from Dundalk, a business education teacher. Some people say, "Why do you teach business, you know typing, shorthand, office machines and business math?" In those days these are important skills for those not planning to attend College but in need of a _job. At the end of the year, I went from summer to the regular school year and then I had a summer coining up. I checked to see if there was anything in Baltimore County or surrounding that would be appropriate for me, not to return on a teaching level, but administration level and build a program around it. Such was not available! However, Plymouth, Massachusetts, (the rock and the Mayflower) offered a new challenge to me. The superintendent there had an elementary background and since the school system was expanding, he needed an assistant. I ended going up to Plymouth, Massachusetts for 3 years as an assistant to the superintendent. It was great? It was a small school system and I worked. We complimented each other and became great friends. I was welcome in his home. His wife had an interesting philosophy, leave those dam dishes in the sink, if the kids want to go on a hike with Morn and Dad or want to go play softball, that became the priority, their kids. They couldn't have kids and had adopted two kids. They were just wonderful parents and he was a superb superintendent. His whole philosophy of working with people and children and everything like that built on that type of thing. About that time, Baltimore County was continuing to grow and they wanted to establish a personnel office. Instead of having someone worry about the secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, there was a need to draw all of that together. They invited me down to be interviewed. I accepted the job and held it for 25 years. We started with 4 people, 2 secretaries and the woman that interviewed me many years ago. I now was her boss. When I retired in 1983, we had about. 35 people in personnel. We had to recruit about 1000 teachers in September and maybe about 2 or 3 hundred during the year. At our peak, we had 120,000 students and 60 some schools. Our staff used to

recruit teachers practically all over the country and I know at least 250 colleagues in different Universities all over the East Coast and as far west as Colorado. I wasn't on all of the Campuses but had probably visited 100 Campuses over my career. We had a very fine school system. People didn't realize it when we would go out and tell all about our different teachers, modern facilities, elementary schools having a nurse, librarian, band music, tremendous curriculum guides, having vocal music, you name it, gyms, auditoriums, people would just sit there with their mouths open. It is interesting. One out of four teachers come from Pennsylvania.

Barbara: One out of four teachers come from Pennsylvania?

Mr.: On the weekend it was a caravan of teachers going home to visit.

Barbara: Well, there were close.

Mr.: Pennsylvania has a lot of Colleges and Universities, a lot of State Colleges, etc. A lot of the people who were administrators and so forth, come into Baltimore County and become Assistant Principals and Principals.

Barbara: So when you worked for Baltimore County, you sort of lived in Dundalk.

Mr.: Oh, I have always lived in Dundalk.

Barbara: Why did you choose Dundalk? Interesting.

Mr.: Well, let's see, after my first year living in Essex, some colleagues moved into Dundalk and I decided to do the same. The person that became my room mate was teaching in Dundalk also. When I came back in 1958, Director of Personnel job, it seemed logical and I wasn't necessarily going to live in Towson, a half an hour away. I don't mind driving so then the person in Essex moved to the Dunmanway Apartments. The fellow said, "Why don't you look at the apartments there?" I did and have lived there since 1958. First time I talked to the class I told them I came to this strange town called Dundalk. Basically, I have never left. Some friends in Towson say, You live in Dundalk? Can't you afford to live in Towson?" Why do I want to live in Towson. Dundalk to me is like the little town I grew up in and I am very comfortable with it here.


Barbara: Well, I guess it is time to wrap things up. Do you have any particular thoughts about war or having had the experiences you had?

Mr.: I have to tell you, for 40 years, I have been registered as Republican and I became so distressed last spring that I re-registered as a Democrat. That doesn't mean that I don't think each has any fine ideas, I just don't think the government was honest with us to get us in this war. Being a confirmed bachelor, I don't have to worry about sons and daughters and grandchildren being over there and losing their lives. I find it very difficult to justify continuing. I don't know enough about the ins and outs but I would hope as soon as possible that we get out! You look at the pictures of these people in their 20's and 30's and they are just beginning their careers. I am 80 and I had a wonderful career. When you look at the balance coming back blind, missing arms, missing legs, I just can't believe that it is all worth it. I know what the schools need, I know what the poor need, 200 billion dollars already being poured into a questionable war when there are so many of our own people who still need help here in the United States of America.

Barbara: Yes. A good place to end and thank you for coming in to talk with us.

Welter M. Snyder, Director of Personnel

Board of Education of Baltimore County, Maryland
B.S. February, 1050 M. d. August, 1 950
Ed D. 1957

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	WESTERN UNION A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT	1201	SYMBOLS DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LC=Deferred Cable NLT=Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram
The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.			
G104 42 GOVT=WUX WASHINGTON DC 18 904P			
MRS EDITH M SNYDER=  19 AM 7 52			
357 ORCHARD ST SPRINGDALE PENN=			
THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS DEEP REGRET THAT YOUR SON CORPORAL WALTER M SNYDER HAS BEEN REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION SINCE SEVENTEEN DECEMBER IN GERMANY IF FURTHER DETAILS OR OTHER INFORMATION ARE RECEIVED YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED= DUNLOP ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.			

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless its deferred character is indicated by a suitable symbol above or preceding the address.	WESTERN UNION A. N. WILLIAMS PRESIDENT	1201	SYMBOLS DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LC=Deferred Cable NLT=Cable Night Letter Ship Radiogram
The filing time shown in the date line on telegrams and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.			
G10 22 GOVT=WASHINGTON DC 29 247A			
MRS EDITH M SNYDER= 845 MAY 29 AM 7 38			
357 ORCHARD ST SPRINGDALE PENN=			
THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON CPL SNYDER WALTER M RETURNED TO MILITARY CONTROL DATE UNREPORTED= J A ULIO THE ADJUTANT GENERAL.			

Kriegsgefangenenpost
STALAG
Geprüft
D II
An
Postkarte
15.3.45

Mrs HARRY R SNYDER

Gebührenfrei

Absender:
Vor- und Zuname: CPL WALTER M SNYDER
Gefangenenummer: 081794
Lager-Bezeichnung: STALAG III C
Deutschland (Allemagne)

Empfangsort: SPRINGDALE
Straße: 357 ORCHARD ST
Land: PENNSYLVANIA, U.S.A.
Landesteil (Provinz usw.)

Kriegsgefangenenpost
STALAG
Geprüft
D II
An
Postkarte
15.3.45

Mrs Lois M. SNYDER

Gebührenfrei

Absender:
Vor- und Zuname: CPL WALTER M SNYDER
Gefangenenummer: 081794
Lager-Bezeichnung: STALAG III C

Empfangsort: SPRINGDALE
Straße: ORCHARD ST.
Land: PENNSYLVANIA, U.S.A.
Landesteil (Provinz usw.)

Kriegsgefangenenlager

Datum: 10/MARCH/45

DARLING MOTHER — a NOTE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT
I AM STILL GETTING ALONG OK AND THINK OF YOU
ALL THE TIME. I AM THINKING OF THE MANY PLANS
WE MUST FULFILL WHEN I AGAIN GET HOME AGAIN
AND HOW MUCH I HOPE TO DO FOR YOU!! ONCE
I GET STARTED WE REALLY WILL SHOW THEM DARLING
BUT FOR NOW, ALL MY LOVE AND KISSES — Walter

Send the complete address to both letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. For information, mark box, or check amount, space for exact spelling is not suitable for postage.

TO: **MR. H. R. SANDER**
357 ORCHARD STREET
ALLY COUNTY
SPRINGDALE, PENNA. U.S.A.

FROM: **FRANK BOYER** 25708422
By 207 270 P.A. 0019 P.A.
A.P.O. 403 5/4 P.M.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Sender's complete address above

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 1

May 3, 1945
 Germany

My Dear Mrs. Snyder,
 I cannot get this off fast enough, for I know the news will be most welcome. No doubt you have been informed by the War Dept. that Walter was a P.W. he is now free, being liberated by the Allied Army just a few days ago. I talked with Walter for a few hours, he is in good health, perhaps a bit thinner from the experience the went thru but nevertheless he is alive, safe and well. He asked me to drop you a few lines, please save this and show it to him when he gets home, that way he will see that I kept my promise to him. It may be a few weeks before he can get out due to the red tape etc. that is necessary, I know it won't be too long before he will be home. I meant to see him again but we left the area early the next day. In the hopes he gets home soon
 Capt. Frank Boyer
 HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

TO: **Mr. H. R. Sander**
357 Orchard St.
Springdale, Pa.

FROM: **Cpl. A. Tomal** 51742077
By 207 270 P.A. 0019 P.A.
A.P.O. 403 5/4 P.M.
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Sender's complete address above

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 1

May 5, 1945

Dear Mr. Snyder,
 I cannot get this off fast enough to you, but I know you are well welcome. No doubt you know your son, Walter, was a Prisoner of War! Today he is free, having been liberated by the Allied Army a few days ago. I know he is anxious to get home, but it will be only a few weeks more! I hope that he is on his way now, if not home by now. He is well in good health, even though he had a bit of an experience! I talked with him for a few hours and promised him I would write to you for him. You see, Mr. Snyder, this is a little late, but I hope that he will be with you soon.
 Cpl. A. Tomal
 P.S. I myself come from Pleuro, Pa., a few miles away from Springdale.

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

WAR & NAVY DEPARTMENTS
 V-MAIL SERVICE
 OFFICIAL BUSINESS

PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE TO AVOID PAYMENT OF POSTAGE, \$300

POSTAL SERVICE
 JUN 9
 6-AM
 1945

TO: **MR. H. R. SANDER**
357 ORCHARD STREET
ALLY COUNTY
SPRINGDALE, PENN. U.S.A.

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 1



Honorable Discharge

RECORDED
WESTMORELAND COUNTY

This is to certify that

FEB 29 1947

WALTER M. SNYDER
RA 33 431 339 S/SGT 2314 ASU, RICHMOND RECRUITING CENTER
DISTRICT RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Army of the United States

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military
service of the United States of America.*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest
and Faithful Service to this country.*

Given at SEPARATION POINT
CAMP LEE, VIRGINIA

Date 6 MARCH 47

J. A. SULLIVAN
Major, U. S. A.

Source: Walter Snyder memoirs

INDIANA
MILITARY
Organization

Page last revised

James D. West

www.IndianaMilitary.org

