

Bill Stahl
422nd Regiment
106th Infantry Division
Unknown POW Camp

December 13, 2004 - Veterans remember Battle of the Bulge. Members to commemorate battle's 60th anniversary

JUNCTION CITY -- In December 1944, the U.S. Army's [106th Infantry Division](#) had slogged its way across France, fresh reinforcements for the Allied nations' anticipated final assault on Nazi Germany that would end World War II in Europe.

"We figured the war was getting close to an end," Junction City lawyer Bill Stahl said last week. "And everybody was saying that soon we'd take Berlin."

Two weeks before Christmas, the [106th Infantry Division's 422nd Battalion](#), which included the then-18-year-old Pfc. Stahl, took up positions along a 27-mile front deep in the Ardennes Forest, only a few miles from the German frontier.

But more than half of the 14,000 U.S. troops attached to the [106th Infantry](#), including Stahl, didn't really celebrate Christmas that year. On Dec. 19, 1944, Stahl was captured by German troops, three days after Nazi leader Adolf Hitler had unleashed a surprise 250,000-man counteroffensive that quickly broke through Allied positions in the Ardennes. The resulting military engagement became known as the [Battle of the Bulge](#), which stands as the biggest and costliest military battle in U.S. history, historians have noted.

Six decades after the battle, Stahl has organized a 60th anniversary Battle of the Bulge reunion of Kansas-area members of the [106th Infantry](#), an event scheduled for 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday at Coyote Canyon restaurant, 1251 S.W. Ashworth Place, in Topeka.

By the time U.S. and other Allied forces finally pushed the Germans back to pre-battle positions at the end of January 1945, Allied commander Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower had poured an additional 250,000 U.S. troops into the 80-mile-long Ardennes breach, the largest number ever assembled for a single battle.

U.S. forces suffered with more than 80,000 killed, wounded or captured, resulting in the heaviest single-battle toll in U.S. history, according to military historians.

About half of the American losses in the battle represent prisoners captured by the Germans during the early days of engagement, said L. Martin Jones, of Lawrence, a former second lieutenant with the [106th Infantry](#).

Jones spent about 110 days in German POW camps, as did Stahl, before being liberated in late April 1945 as invading U.S. troops overran the western sections of the Third Reich.

Jones said he has attended eight of nine previous 106th reunions, all of which have been conducted in Topeka.

"It's impossible to explain to someone not in the service the bond that is developed when you are fighting and your life depends on your next-door neighbor and his depends on you," Jones said. "You work together, and there is a bond that develops that is lifelong."
(By Matt Moline, The Capital-Journal)



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