

DID NOT BELIEVE THEY WERE GOING TO BE FREED

With 69th Division East of Leipzig, Germany, Today — (U.P.) — American soldiers did not believe it when the guards who used to beat them—such as "Buttstroke Charlie"—told them they were going to be marched to freedom.

"We thought it was going to be just another tortuous hike," said Pfc. Vincent J. Amanna (749 Anchor St.) Philadelphia, Pa. Amanna was among the 12,000 Allied prisoners led into American lines by the German colonel commandant of their camp.

"Buttstroke Charlie," according to Amanna, was one of the German guards at the camp who had a fondness for beating prisoners with his rifle.

Amanna and Pfc. Charles Gilbert, Kittanning, Pa., were taken prisoner Dec. 21, 1944, while fighting with the 106th Division near St. Vith, Belgium, in the battle of the bulge.

Along with fifty other Americans they were jammed into a box car for their trip eastward. They were left there for two days without food, heat, or latrine facilities. The men relieved themselves in one stinking corner of the car where nobody slept.

Gilbert was sick at his stomach while he told his story. For the past four months he had lived on mostly bread and water, and his first meal of good American G.I. food was too much for him.

Amanna and Gilbert said their hike to freedom began at 2 A. M. at the town of Toruga, 15 miles northeast of Wurzen.

"Rumors were running wild," said Amanna. "I didn't believe we were free until I saw a car approaching carrying the Stars and Stripes."

"I cried a little I was so glad to see it."

1945-04-26 POWs marched to American lines by German Colonel

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