

Norwood A. Frye

**Company B, 81st Combat Engineers
106th Infantry Division**

**Recollections of my Military Service in the United States Army During World War II
and as a Prisoner of War in Germany**

March 9, 1943 – November 17, 1945



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Overview

Norwood A. Frye left for active Military Service with the United States Army on his 19th. Birthday, March 15, 1943. He trained and served with the 81st. Combat Engineers of the 106th Infantry Division until his capture during the last major German offensive of World War II; “The Battle of the Bulge”. After being captured, Mr. Frye was sent to a Prisoner of War (POW) work camp in Dresden, Germany and experienced the “Fire Bombing” of that city on the night of February 13 – 14, 1945. In May, after traveling to Czechoslovakia he obtained his freedom and began his trip

back to the American Lines, Home and Discharge from active duty on November 17, 1945. During his service he was awarded two Purple Hearts, the Bronze Star and the Good Conduct Medal. Here is his story in his own words some fifty-plus years after the events took place.

Entering Service

On March 15, 1943 (my 19th. Birthday) I boarded a train at the railroad station in my hometown of Manchester, Connecticut and traveled to Fort Devens, Massachusetts. There, I was issued my clothing (Uniforms etc.) and began my indoctrination into Army life. My stay at Fort Devens was brief. Four days after I arrived, I again boarded a train, this time for Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina where I was to receive "Basic Training".

Arriving at Fort Jackson on March 20th. I learned I was to be a member of Company B of the 81st. Combat Engineers, attached to the 106th Infantry Division – The Golden Lion.



Shoulder patch of the 106th

Even though it was springtime, the heat was awful in South Carolina. During basic training we were awakened early with reveille. After head count was taken we headed to the Mess Hall for breakfast. After breakfast we marched to the drill field for PT (exercise) and then to the field for rifle (marksmanship), hand-to-hand or some other training. In the evening, we had retreat – the lowering of the colors.

Saturdays were a special day - there was an inspection of our gear and our barracks and you didn't want to fail. To ensure that we would pass, we spent Friday nights cleaning everything and making sure our area was squared away. On Sundays I usually went to Church, after which the rest of the day was free. During this training period, we often went on maneuvers in the Congaree Swamp area of SC.

Advanced Training

After finishing Basic, our unit began advanced training. I went to radio school and was to become a radio operator. As a part of our advanced training, in January of 1944 my unit was sent to Tennessee for maneuvers with the 2nd Army. During this exercise it rained most of the time, making things quite unpleasant.

In March the 106th was reassigned from Tennessee to [Camp Atterbury](#), Indiana. Camp Atterbury is located just south of Indianapolis. There, I attended another radio school to complete my radio operator training. Classes at this school were held

during the afternoon and early evening hours.

While stationed at Camp Atterbury, my wife (Hazel) was able to come to Indiana for a visit. During her visit, we heard that there was a terrible tent fire at the Ringling Brothers Circus in Hartford, Connecticut. We were frantic because we knew that my son was supposed to be at the circus with his Aunt (Marion) on the day of the fire. We tried calling home to find out if they went and if they were all right but, we couldn't get through by telephone. I was able to get a 3-day pass and my wife Hazel and I headed for home by car. We were relieved when we arrived and found everything was O.K. Having only a 3-day pass, I kissed my wife and son Richard good-bye, and returned to Camp Atterbury. I made it back to camp just in time for Monday morning reveille. Over the next few weeks I completed radio school.

Our company again went into the field for training. I saw that a lot of new men had joined our unit, as replacements for the original members that had been shipped overseas to join units in the field.

Ordered to Europe

We left Camp Atterbury by train in early October and arrived at Camp Miles Standish near Taunton, Massachusetts a few days later. This move was in preparation for our being shipped to Europe and the war.

While at Miles Standish, I was able to go home on weekends and easily make it back (my wife would drive me) for Monday morning roll call. We knew we were going overseas soon so I took every advantage of being able to go home. I didn't look forward to shipping out because it would mean I would not see my wife and son until the war was over.

Our unit boarded the USS Wakefield and left Boston on November 10th, 1944 for England. The Sailors on the Wakefield told us not to worry about the trip, they had gone through everything but a torpedo attack. On the first day out there was a torpedo alert but, we were lucky, it was only a drill. Thankfully, the trip across the Atlantic was uneventful. On the crossing many of the men got seasick and not being one of them, I was stuck on KP (kitchen police) all the way over. It wasn't so bad though; it helped pass the time.



USS Wakefield

We arrived in Liverpool, England on November 17, 1944. From there we were trucked to Moreton-in-Marsh where we were put up in temporary quarters, the well-known 16' x 16' pyramid tent. The tents had wooden floors and a potbelly stove for heat. For most of our stay it rained, turning everything to mud. Thankfully, the tent had that wood floor. On weekends a few of our unit were able to go to London on pass while those that couldn't, got to briefly escape the camp by attending Sunday services at the Church in town.

Belgium

We didn't stay at Moreton-in-Marsh very long (less than two weeks) before we were shipped to South Hampton where we were to cross the channel to France. On December 1st. we were loaded onto boats with our equipment, trucks, air compressors and other materials loaded on other boats for the trip across the English Channel. We started across the channel and two days later we arrived in Rouen, France. Our equipment took another three days to cross the channel so we spent about a week overall in Rouen, again in rain and mud.

When we finally got organized, we moved by convoy to Schonberg, Belgium located in the Ardennes Forest near St. Vith, Belgium. To get to Schoenberg we had to travel a route know as "The Skyline Drive" which ran high on a hill with no trees to conceal our movement. We were told if we stopped for any reason we would be dead ducks as the Germans had the road under constant surveillance and would fire artillery (88's) at anything that moved along the road. As we moved along the ridge they fired on us, some of the shells flying over our heads while others fell short, making for a very anxious trip. We were lucky; we made it to Schonberg without taking any casualties.

Shortly after our arrival, we were caught in a military SNAFU. Initially attached to the 3rd. Army we were transferred to the 1st. Army. In the transfer we were ordered to turn- in all our ammunition, including the ammunition we had for our rifles. We were stuck having to walk guard duty with weapons that didn't have any ammunition. We were told to watch out for a pretty girl who would come up to talk to you while an accomplice would come up from behind and stab you in the back. Hearing this we complained about being without ammunition, some even refused to go on night guard duty. Finally, each guard post was issued one clip of ammunition. This meant that when the post was relieved the guard on duty had to unload his weapon and pass the ammunition on to his relief. Later we were issued one clip of ammunition per rifle. This one clip is all the ammunition we had on the morning of December 16, 1944 when the Battle of the Bulge began and we were sitting right smack-dab in the middle of the German advance.

The Battle of The Bulge Begins

Later that day, about 10 a.m. we were issued two boxes of ammunition for our 30 caliber machine guns plus two clips each for our rifles. We didn't have any hand grenades, bazooka shells, food, dynamite, TNT, or plastic explosives and even the radio was on the fritz. One fellow took it back to Battalion HQ to be repaired.

We were sent up to clear the village of Bleialf, Germany of any German Soldiers we found and to stop their advancement. We got to the top of a hill overlooking the town

and we dug in. A group of German tanks came along the road that we overlooked and stopped. It was a solid line that just sat there and we could do nothing but watch them.

Sometime during the afternoon, an armored car stopped on the hill and the Officer inside ordered us to move out and head back to Schonberg. The armor car was raked by machine gun fire, and the officer ducked back inside. The armored car backed over the hill and the Officer talked some more with our Company Commander, Captain Hynes. We were ordered to leave the hill and make our way back to Schonberg.

Enroute, we came across a number of abandoned trucks all parked together, it appeared to be some kind of reconnaissance outfit. Here we were able to get something to eat, as there were all kinds of hams and other food, we ate very well. The following morning we left (with plenty of food) to continue our march.

Further along, we encountered two German Soldiers and took them Prisoner. Late that afternoon they tried to escape and were shot in their attempt. Because it was getting dark, we stopped for the night and would resume our trip in the morning.

Capture

Being the radio operator, I usually had to stay very close to the Captain Hynes in case he had to communicate with someone. This day was different, for all the ground they had to cover, the scouts were very tired so I left my radio and was sent out as a scout. We came to a clearing with a house in the middle and woods on the far side. I was sent to the house to see if anyone was there and scout the area. I went in to the house and found it empty. I went upstairs and looked out a window, at the far side of the clearing and in the woods I saw a group of German troops. I went back downstairs and signaled to our CO that there were Germans in the woods. He acknowledged and I then went back upstairs to continue to monitor the situation.

The next thing I knew there were all kinds of things hitting the house, bullets I assume. From the upstairs window I could see Germans running across the field. I decided it was time to get the hell out of there. I don't know whether it was a mortar shell or a grenade but something went off upstairs just as I was heading back down the stairs. I got hit in the left arm. I was on the floor wrapping it up when the Germans came in the back door. As they did I shot at one. I don't know if I killed him or not. With that, I was captured. Fortunately, they didn't do anything to me other than take my weapon. That evening I was confined in a potato cellar with other POW's for safe keeping. I didn't see anyone I knew from my outfit there. I tried to give them my mess kit's knife, fork and spoon but they didn't want them. They missed taking my wedding ring and my watch because I had them wrapped in the bandage on my arm.

The next morning we began a march into Germany. The weather was freezing cold. At noon we stopped and were fed a watery rice soup for lunch. Finishing our meal, we continued our trek into Germany. That night we were held in a barn. The next day we marched until noon and were given soup again for lunch. The Germans added some more US prisoners to our group. We were formed into ranks of six abreast and marched in a long line to a railroad siding to wait for a train. The next day it arrived with what they called 40 and 8 cars, because they would hold either 40 men or 8 horses.

Christmas Eve we were still on that train, sitting on a siding waiting to be moved when there was an air raid. I believe we were in Limburg, Germany. We could see flares all around the train. But, we couldn't get out of our car. After the raid was over someone opened the doors to some of the cars and we learned that some of the ones who were able to leave the train were hurt, some were even killed. We learned too that the raid also hit a POW camp. They didn't know how many were killed or wounded there. We waited two days or so till they fixed the tracks and a new engine was brought up to take us on. The 40 & 8 cars were so cramped that we had to sleep in shifts. Those not sleeping had to either sit or stand up. After awhile we would swap around so that everyone had a chance to sleep.

Prison Camp

We finally arrived in Muhlberg, Germany and the POW camp, [Stalag IVB](#). There, we were allowed to take a shower. The shower was great because it had hot water. It felt so good, I didn't want to get out. They took our clothes and sent them through some kind of delousing treatment before we were to get them back. We also got deloused and were given some kind of shot in the chest. I don't know what the shot was for. I didn't receive my own clothing back; I was given some other clothing that had a red triangle on one leg and on the back of the shirt. I suppose this was to identify me as a prisoner. I was then asked my name rank, serial number and specialty. I told them I was a cook. I felt being a cook I would be given a job in a kitchen - I wasn't.

Next, I was issued my POW dog tags, number 312503 and assigned to a barracks. Most of the men already there were British Soldiers. Being Christmas time, they put on a play in keeping with the holiday. They were very kind and shared their food with us. Later that evening I went outside and saw in the distance that Berlin Germany was being bombed. I believe it was New Years Eve.

The next day I was allowed to send a post card home, I was instructed not to say where I was. They were going to censor them and if they didn't like what was written on them they wouldn't be sent out to the states. My first postcard was how my family learned I was a prisoner of war.

Work Camp - Dresden

A few days later approximately 120 of us were sent to a work camp in Dresden, Germany by train. We were quartered in an old "Slaughterhouse" which was to become our home – at least for a while. A German Officer there told us we were a work force, Commando #557. He told us the name of the building was Schlachthof F•nf, which translates to [Slaughterhouse Five](#) in English. This camp became widely know through the book [Slaughterhouse 5](#), written by another POW held there, Kurt Vonnegut. The Officer also asked if any of us would like to fight for Germany on the Russian front. There were no takers. The Officer said we would be allowed to send 2 post cards home every other week, and during the intervening weeks we could send a letter and it would continue that way thereafter, alternating post cards and letters every other week.

The next morning we were awakened before dawn for work detail assignment. We were given a cup of ersatz coffee for breakfast and counted into small work groups

with 1 or 2 guards per group. This was to become the routine start of each day for us. On this day, my group was assigned to clear streets that were full of brick and rubble from Allied bombing raids made prior to our arrival in Dresden. We only had to clear a path wide enough so that people could walk in both directions and wide enough for a pushcart to get through. However, the path wasn't wide enough for trucks to get through. When the day was over we walked back to the camp and were given watery soup, a piece of bread, some ersatz coffee and sometimes either a piece of cheese or a slice of cold meat (cold cuts) to eat.

One day while clearing bricks and parts of the buildings a soldier came out of the rubble, stood next to me and shouted to his friend that he had found a jar of beans. A German Officer who understood English happened to hear him. The Officer called him off the pile and took him away. He was charged with looting, given a trial, found guilty and was executed by firing squad the following Sunday morning. That Sunday two of our boys were sent over to dig his grave. The name of the executed soldier was Mike Palaia.

I had a similar experience but fortunately for me it had a different outcome. One day while cleaning up rubble, one of our guards turned around and said I had stolen some tea and that he was going to shoot me. I told him I didn't and I emptied all my pockets to show him I didn't have any tea. It was then a German woman came out a door of the building and convinced the guard that I hadn't stolen any tea. Finally the guard let me go. From that day on I prayed every day. I never knew how to pray and mean it from the heart before this episode.

Fire Bombing of Dresden

On the night of February 13th beginning about 10:15 p.m. the British began bombing the city. As usual, during air raids everyone headed for a bomb shelter. On this night, after the air raid was over, the guard's count came up short by two POW's. They were later found alive and asleep in a building where all of the windows were blown out by the bombing. I was one of the two missing prisoners. Just shows that if you are tired enough, you can sleep through anything.

A second air raid came at approximately 1:22 a.m. on February 14th. This time, every POW made it into the air raid shelter. There we could feel the concussions and hear the bombing going on outside. At approximately 1:50 a.m. the bombing ended and we came out of the air raid shelter and saw the entire city of Dresden on fire. The heat from the fires was tremendous. As we looked around we couldn't see anyone moving about, we wondered where everybody was.

After daybreak, I was sent to the other side of the city as punishment for sleeping through the first air raid on the previous night. There were five other POW's sent along with me. We started clearing the streets of building rubble as the bombing had destroyed most of Dresden's buildings. Around 12:15 p.m., the air raid sirens again sounded, it was the Americans turn to bomb Dresden. The guards would not allow us to go into any of the air raid shelters and we were told that we had to go back to the Slaughterhouse - we took off on a dead run. I was hit by the concussion of one of the exploding bombs and was thrown to the ground and knocked out - for how long I don't know. When I came too the air raid was over so, I got up and made it back to the slaughterhouse, again on a dead run.

After The Bombing

When I arrived at the Slaughterhouse it was in ruins and the POW's that were there were loading sides of meat onto a cart in preparation of abandoning the complex. We POW's were moved to a South African POW camp in Gorbitz - a western suburb of Dresden located about 6 miles from the center of the city. The South African's in this camp had been caught in North Africa and had been prisoners here for some time. We swear some of them even had girlfriends in town, but weren't sure. We found that the first barracks (called a Lager by the South Africans) we were housed in was very, very crowded and we had to sleep three to a bed. Sleeping in this fashion was quite uncomfortable, when someone turned over the other two in the bed had to turn at the same time.

We stayed in that barracks for two days before being moved to different quarters on the other side of the camp - about 50 feet in front of the South African's barracks. Here, the sleeping arrangements were much better and three to a bed was no longer necessary. In our spare time at night some would draw pictures and others would dream up recipes of food we would like to have when we got home. I dreamt of the largest cream puff you could ever imagine.

One day I was sent to clean up a bakery and some of the other mess in the area. The building had no roof due to the bombing. In the bakery I found a large tub of bread dough and when I broke through the crust on top, I was greeted with the foulest smelling odor I've ever encountered, the dough smelled just like cow dung. In the corner of the bakery a bunch of moldy rolls were all stacked up. That evening before I started back to camp I filled my pant legs and the arms of my coat with these rolls. Back at camp the Germans asked what I had and I showed them. They thought I was nuts/odd for carrying moldy rolls so they didn't do anything to me but they confiscated them and made me leave them there. I thought taking the rolls was a good idea as I had heard that penicillin was made from bread mold. I guess I lucked out this time, as the consequences for having the rolls could have been quite severe.

It was several days after the bombing before we were sent back into Dresden proper for more work detail. At this point we had to go into the cellars (air raid shelters) of the bombed-out buildings and bring out the bodies of those lost in the raids/fires and place them in an open area we created in the street. The bombing and subsequent fires killed several hundred thousand people.

A day or two later I was sent to a German hospital. They found I had yellow jaundice and treated me for it for a few days before they sent me back to camp.

Upon my return, I was back to cleaning up the streets and shelters of Dresden. We couldn't enter all the shelters at that time, some we had to wait until the buildings cooled off before we could go into them to remove the bodies.

Once you entered into a basement of one house you could walk completely around the block from cellar to cellar. In the basements, there were petitioned off areas for people to store their personal things. We did find canned goods in some of them. At the center of the block there would have been grass, with trees and a play area.

When we found a body we would take it up to street level and place it by the road where, after a while someone would go by and put something white and powdery on them. I think it was lime. The bodies were left in the streets for two days to give families time to claim their relatives and bury them wherever they wished. One of the hardest things to witness was the people looking for their husbands, mothers, fathers, or children's bodies after the bombing. The city was so destroyed and messed up, the people weren't even sure what street they were on.

After a day or two the bodies were moved to a park by the zoo. There, they had built out of train tracks, something that looked like two football goal posts. Between them they placed additional rails about 6 inches apart. The bodies were placed on the tracks and railroad ties were stacked under them and set afire to consume the bodies. Sometimes the bodies were stacked up to 10 feet high. Not all the bodies were cremated on these pyres; some of the dead were buried in mass graves.

One of our guards was an older man and had lost one eye on the Russian front, two others were somewhat younger and both were real mean, one was about 16. The 16 year old seemed to be either shell-shocked or in some other way afflicted; he had a major screw loose. He would put his rifle between his legs and would move the gun up and down as if it were an anti-aircraft gun. We called him Junior. He was being trained by two other guards to be as mean as they were.

We continued to take bodies out of the bomb shelters for a few weeks and were finally given a Sunday off. On this day we were able to have a hot shower and told we had a new officer in charge of us. He seemed very nice and did try to make our life a little better.

It was back to work on Monday morning, more cleanup of the rubble and removing bodies from the air raid shelters. Of the corpses we handled it seemed as if all the German men carried briefcases. In some of the cases we found ration coupons, some even had a pistol or two in them. The women carried backpacks, in them we usually found bread, ration coupons and money. We would give the ration coupons and some of the money to the guards. We would eat the bread and whatever else we found in that section of the building. One day while working outside of a bank and a pub we had a fire burning to keep warm. We found all kinds of money and we cooked turnips and potatoes in beer and ate them when the guards weren't around. From the pub some of the fellows drank a lot of the merchandise and when it came time to go back to camp they had to be held up all the way back.

One of our boys had been in the German hospital for a long time. We heard that he had died of malnutrition, because he would not plunder for the food he needed to stay alive. His name was Edward Crone and he came from NY. I don't know who buried him or where he was buried.

One day while we were cleaning out the shelters, we were in one that gave us a particularly nasty problem. We had to pass the bodies through a small hole in the wall and then up a flight of stairs before we could get them to the street where they could be picked up. Junior was sitting at the top of the stairs hollering at us, pointing his rifle with its bayonet attached and he would touch us in the back with the bayonet as we passed. As we pulled the body of a woman through the hole, one of her legs came off. Two fellows took her up the stairs and when Junior saw her missing leg he

started hollering at me. At that time I had had enough of his abuse. I picked up the leg and threw it up the stairs at him. We never saw Junior again. Where he went I don't know.

We worked digging bodies out of cellars and air raid shelters from February until the first part of May. There were still unburied bodies lying in the streets and in the cellars when we left Dresden in April.

Every once in a while there would be someone near us who would light up a cigarette and tell us not to look at him. He would tell us how the war was going and that it was near its end. He also told us the Americans were in Freital, Germany.

On one Sunday that we had off, some of us went into the fields and dug up dandelions. The guards laughed at us and thought we were nuts but when we cooked them we had a feast. We offered the guards some; they refused the offer and continued to laugh at us.

Leaving Dresden

A day or two later we were told to pack up our belongings because we were going to be moved. When we lined up, the German guard escorting us had his wife and daughter with him. The Officer in charge told us that he was given orders to get us to the American lines. This was about mid April 1945.

We started on our trip out of Dresden traveling through the center of the city. Enroute, we passed a large and very beautiful church that had some bomb damage but, it didn't seem to be very extensive, I thought it would be a shame if the church were demolished completely. Upon reaching the far side of the city we started up a large hill and when we got to the top we looked back and saw Dresden being bombed again. We moved a little faster now, after all we were going back to our own lines and freedom.

We traveled about two days before arriving in Helendorf, Germany. We stopped in front of a building that looked like a roadside inn (Gasthaus Kecjhnich?). When we went up to the second floor to see the room, the German Officer said it wasn't big enough to accommodate us all. The innkeeper said he could make it larger - he went to the outside wall and pulled on two ropes causing one of the walls to swing up towards the ceiling creating a room twice as large as the original.

Our next task was to find some straw bedding so we didn't have to sleep on hard wood floor. We went outside to a stable and brought in some straw, a lot of straw. The more straw you use the softer the bed - at least that was our thinking. What a mistake, we became infested with lice which made for a most uncomfortable night and following day. We were short on food again, so out to the fields again for more dandelions we went. A few days later we were back on the old bread and soup or meat and ersatz coffee diet.

We soon left that place, again moving toward the American lines. Early that morning we could hear artillery fire. It was fairly close and we thought it could be from Russian guns. As we started down the road we could see German Troops running from the direction of the artillery fire. After going a little further we could hear

airplanes coming our way and as they passed overhead we could see they were Russian. To our surprise they turned and started back towards us. We had just started through an open field when they began strafing us. We headed for the woods and into the ditches along the side of the road for cover.

After a short while the planes left and we got back on the road to continue our trip to the American lines. We only had about one third of the men we started with. When the strafing started and everyone scattered to find a safe place many decided to continue on their own. As we started down the road again two of the young guards started to argue with each other. They both got very mad and they shot each other. We didn't stop to see if they were alive or dead.

The War Ends

We went a short distance further when the German officer took off his uniform, handed his pistol to Shultee (Shultee could speak and understand German and was our translator, letting us know what the Germans wanted us to do) and disguised himself as a civilian. He then headed for Wyklitz, Czechoslovakia where he had relatives. Several of us POW's went with him because his relatives wanted Americans in their houses when the Russians came.

A few kilometers down the road we arrived in the small town of Wyklitz (maybe Wistritz). As we entered the town, the Town Fathers were standing on the sidewalks with a pile of guns and holding Russian flags.

About 11:00 a.m. I went to a home with a woman and her daughter. At noontime, she offered me many things to eat but remembering a warning we were given that eating too much would make us sick, I ate only one potato. About an hour later a Russian soldier came to the door. The woman told him she had an American there with her, I stood up and waved to him and he left.

A short time later I went down to the main street in town and the Town Fathers were still there. Just then two motorcycles, a jeep with four men in it and two more motorcycles (all Russian Soldiers) came through the town but they didn't stop, the town fathers waved their flags as they passed by.

At 4:00 p.m. I saw a Russian Soldier having an argument with a pregnant young lady over a loaf of bread. He put his rifle with bayonet attached between her legs and ripped her up the middle. We had seen enough and decided it was time to leave this place.

Beginning The Trip Home

We took a German closed box truck and rounded up all the Americans we could and drove off, heading towards Freital, Germany. We had been told that the Americans were there. We drove all night and it was about 8:00 in the morning when we arrived at Freital. The Russians were outside of the city (on the east side) waiting for the Americans to leave before they entered. After going about half way through the city we saw a German command car parked along side the road. We stopped to see if it would run and when we found it did, we told our passengers in the back of the truck that it was theirs and that we were going to Paris in the command car.

There were six of us in the command car when we left the truck behind. The Americans were packing up to leave the city. We stopped to find out where we could get some gas and something to eat. They sent us to the mess hall for food and said they would take care of the gas. Because they were all packed up and ready to leave all we could get for food at the mess hall was, sandwiches - we got peanut butter and apple butter sandwiches. They tasted wonderful.

Somewhere along the way, a Polish POW had joined us. He asked if he could have what was left in the peanut butter and apple butter jars. The cook said no and walked off. We all thought he was a stinker. Then he came back with two cartons, one on his shoulder (peanut butter) and another beneath his arm (apple butter) and he told the Polish Soldier to take them home and enjoy them. The Polish POW broke down and cried.

We then left for Paris and for some fun. We drove all day and it was starting to get dark when we saw a RAMP (Replaced American Military Personnel?) Camp. We were in Eisenach, Germany and we decided to stop and get something to eat and a good nights sleep. Little did we know that this stop would put an end to our trip to Paris. When we stopped, they took our command car, asked for our names, rank and serial numbers. We were then sent to a building where we were given hot showers, deloused and issued new uniforms and sent to get some hot food. After eating, we were given real beds for the night.

The following day we were flown to Erfurt, Germany where we again went through the shower, delousing and new uniform routine. The rest of the day I was debriefed, they wanted to know where I was captured and the unit I was in. Here I got a lot of food and another good bed for the night.

The next morning I was flown to Reims, France and when I arrived, I again went through the hot shower, delousing and new clothes ritual. I was then sent to a hospital where I remained for two weeks. I had a good case of diarrhea that wouldn't go away.

For my next move, I was driven by truck to Camp Lucky Strike near Leharve, France. When I arrived I was sent to another US hospital because my diarrhea was still with me. I learned that the Red Cross had stopped giving out donuts because so many men were getting sick from them but they did come by and asked me if I wanted to send a telegram home to let them know I was all right. I said yes. I wrote the telegram and told them to whom and where to send it.

After a weeks stay, I was released from the hospital. I was then sent over to the tent area where I spent another three weeks before boarding the USS Hermitage on June 9, 1945 for the trip back home to the States.



USS Hermitage

It took about six days to make it to New York. Coming into port I saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time - I broke down and cried.

We disembarked and were sent to Camp Shanks, in New Jersey. I spent a day there before boarding a train for Fort Devens, Massachusetts. I had come full circle; I started my military service at Fort Devens some two years and two months earlier.

Home At Last

From Fort Devens, I was given a 45 day, delay in route furlough and was to report to Lake Placid, New York at the end of the furlough. Six of us from the Hartford, Connecticut area rented a cab and headed for home. When we arrived in East Hartford I got out and called my wife to come and pick me up. I wasn't sure if my son would know me when I got home, but he sure did.

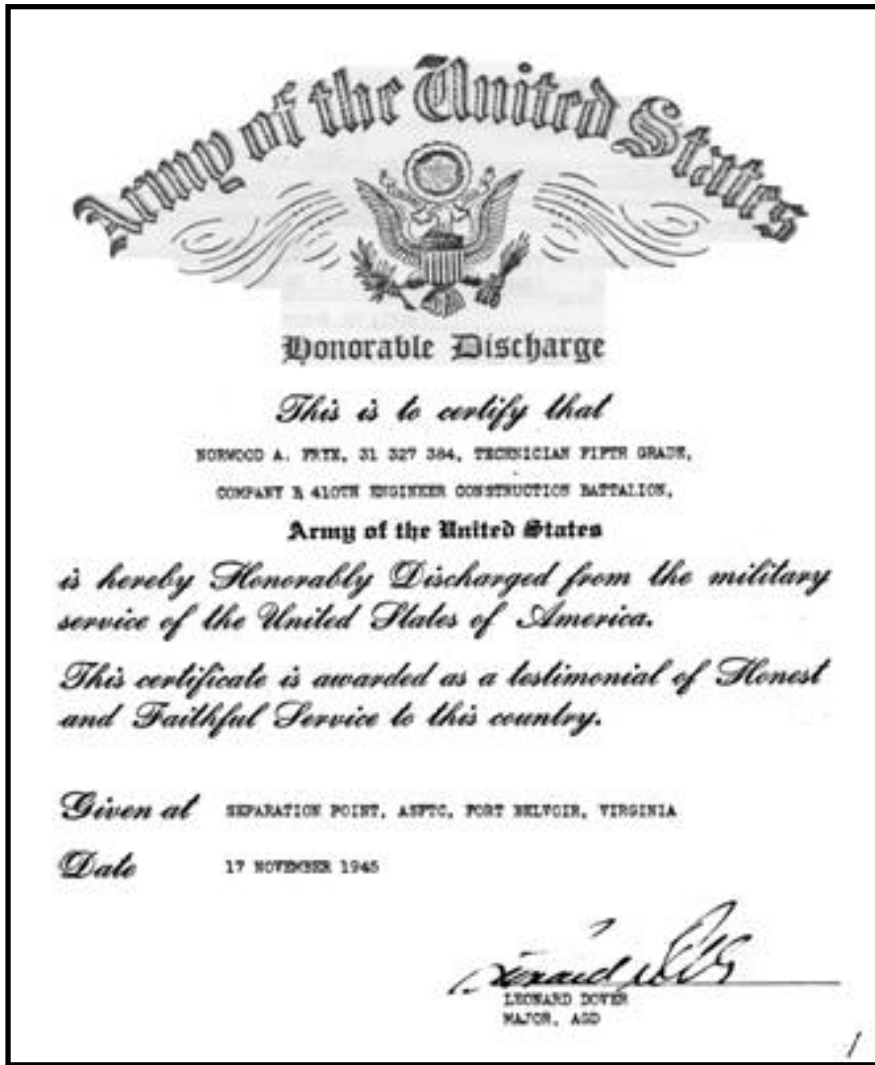
One of the things I found out when I got home was that one of the first post cards I sent was the only way my wife knew I was a POW. Up until that time I was listed as missing in action. I was sitting in the living room at home when the telegram I had sent from France telling my wife that I was OK and on my way home, arrived.

One day we had gone out shopping and Edward Cronos father and mother stopped by the house. They left their phone number with my mother in law and asked if I would call them the following day. I called them and told them I would stop by to see them when we went to Lake Placid. On our way up to Lake Placid we detoured to Rochester, New York to see them. I think the hardest thing I ever had to do was to tell Edward's parents that he would not steal food so he could live. They told us he planned to be a Minister.

Discharged

After three weeks at Lake Placid going through their psychological reconditioning, I was sent to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. I took my car and came home almost every weekend. I had been there about three months when they told me I could go home. I was given my discharge papers (November 17, 1945), "for the convenience of the government" which meant I was on my way home for good and that is where I planned to stay.

I hope that no other Americans will have to experience the horror I lived through in Dresden. However I can't express the pride I feel in having served my country.



Company B, 81st Combat Engineers of the 106th Infantry Division

1ST SQUAD SITTING L-R: DEPEOLA, JONES, JOHNSON, HEADER, BARTHOWNIE, FROBOSE, JEWANNALLY, PALZO, MORCELLO, CORRIE, FRYE, BOLTROW, BROWN,

NICHOLS, BUSSING, POLIKES, VANDERWORTH

2ND SQUAD KNEELING L-R: DEMMING, NAGLE, KELLY, TRESTRAGAL, LAINE, BOGERT, DEBORGAO, HOMES, VANIC, SHEA, BRADLY, DAFFAN, BARRINGTON, LICKITTE, BOWERS, LOCKART, AILSTOCK

3RD SQUAD STANDING L-R: LT MITSHEL, RICCI, ROSSON, TETZLAFF, TOOTHACER, HENDRICKSON, EKLAND, KREZMISKIO, BUISICK, LOICS, PAYNER, McGUARER, BAILES, CLOYED, SPECK, CONNERS, HANSON



Route Traveled Through The USA



Route Traveled Through Europe

Contributed by Norwood Frye's Grand-Daughter, Debbie Frye Mitchell

My grandfather was a member of the 106th Infantry Division, who was captured during the Battle of the Bulge and was subsequently a prisoner of war in Dresden, Germany. About 5-10 years ago I had my grandfather dictate his memories of his time in the service to me and we started to put them together so that we could pass it down from generation to generation. I am happy to share this story with you.

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