

Willard Diefenthaler

106th Infantry Division



May 30, 1943.

Willard Diefenthaler served with the **106th Infantry Division** in Europe with his identical twin brother, Wilbur. Both men were captured at the Battle of the Bulge and imprisoned in Stalag 9B, where Wilbur died. Willard was moved to Stalag 9A and was liberated on Good Friday, 1945.

From the Willard Diefenthaler papers. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Interviewed by Mark Van Ells. Wisconsin Veterans Museum, December 1995.
WWII photo: Willard (left) and Wilbur Diefenthaler,

Willard and Wilbur Diefenthaler trained at Camp Phillips, Kan., and both were assigned to the 106th Infantry. Willard recalls how mistaken identity almost denied him his first meal at the mess hall. He describes his chemical warfare training and recalls witnessing British ingenuity in Oxford, England.

Willard Diefenthaler chronicles the early hours of the Battle of the Bulge. Surviving those first hours was the first of many "lucky" moments.

Diefenthaler describes his capture during the Battle of the Bulge. Prisoners marched and dragged each other through the rain and sleet to a railhead, where they were packed into boxcars for prison camps. While waiting outside Lindberg Prison Camp, Diefenthaler narrowly escaped strafing from an Allied plane. He recalls a moment of kindness from a German civilian and describes the grim living conditions at Stalag 9B in Bad Orb, Germany.

The Germans moved Diefenthaler to Stalag 9A on Jan. 25, 1945. He describes his last memories of his brother, Wilbur, who was too ill to move. Decades later, Diefenthaler received his brother's final letter and met the American medic who took care of Wilbur during his final days.

The Allies liberated Stalag 9A on Good Friday, 1945. Diefenthaler describes how several prisoners exacted revenge against "The Man of Confidence," the sergeant formerly in charge of the camp. The next staging ground was Camp Lucky Strike in LaHavre, France, where some former POWs died from overeating.

Diefenthaler reflects on the importance of attending veterans' reunions. He notes that POWs suffered during *and* after the war, and he commends supportive POW wives.

<http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/pow/stalag9b.html>

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