

Rev. Ewell C. Black, Jr.

*Co. A/422 Regt
106th Division*

I joined the 106th Division at [Camp Atterbury](#), IN, in March, 1944. My Basic Infantry Training was at Ft. McClelland, AL, with assignment following to the Army College Program at Auburn University, Auburn, AL. With the Invasion of Europe being prepared for Spring, 1944, this Program was ended and we were assigned to Divisions to replace those being sent overseas for replacement depots.

The Division left [Camp Atterbury, IN](#), in October, 1944, for England. Shortly after Thanksgiving, 1944, we went to France and then to Belgium. On December 10, 1944, we relieved the Second Division in The Ardennes which was described as "a quiet front." On December 16, 1944, the Battle of the Bulge began as Hitler made a last gamble to secure a Negotiated Peace with the Allies. We held in place against the German attack on the 16th and were bypassed and left in the German rear. On the 18th, orders were received to move back and take the town of Schoenberg, Belgium. These orders indicated that we would be met for the attack, which was to be on December 19th, by a Combat Team from one of our Armored Divisions. They did not come as their Commander deemed it to dangerous for them to venture that far behind the German lines. We carried out our part of the attack without knowing that we would be without their help. Fighting continued until about Noon, when our officers made the decision to surrender since we were making no progress against the German Armor and Infantry, only getting men killed and wounded.

We left **Schoenberg** early in the afternoon and marched to **Prum** where we spent the night. The following day we marched to **Dockweiler**—Drojs, arriving after dark. The night was spent in a warehouse — no heat. The following day we received our first food since December 18th. That afternoon, we were moved into boxcars (40 & 8) where we remained until Christmas Morning — no food and very, very cold with ice on inside of cars. Since they could not be moved we were taken out and placed in some nearby buildings and given some weak soup. About the middle of the afternoon we were bombed by American planes, which ended when some of the men tramped out POW in the snow. That afternoon or the next morning we began a march which brought us to **Koblenz**. This took three days and two nights on the road. In Koblenz we were housed in barracks in a part of the city which had not been bombed. That ended the next day about noon! The building was concrete but had metal frame windows. Not only was the glass blown out but some of the frames which resulted in most of the men being cut by glass and some being killed either by the glass or the metal frames which acted as harpoons. The same action occurred on the second day and we informed the Germans that we would not remain there and must be moved to a safer place.

We left Koblenz just before dark, marching all night and the next day. We arrived at **Stalag XII-A** in Limburg about dark on December 30th or 31st. Housing was in large medical tents which had been captured. We slept on the ground with no heat in the tents (we had no heat in any of the various places which we were housed during the march). The following night we received "grass soup", which was our first meal since Koblenz. New Year's of 1944 was spent at XII—A and several days following. We were loaded in boxcars for turned out to be a five or six day ride to **Stalag IV-B** at Muhlberg. They had given us food for about three days and no water. Of course, there were no bathroom facilities only the cracks in the doors. Many now had diarrhea, so you can imagine the conditions in the cars. Also, ice formed on the inside of the boxcars every night and we

were strafed several times —the guards ran and left us locked in. By the time we reached **IV-B** some had died and many were too sick and weak to walk from the siding.

We were allowed to bath but no clean clothes — many of us had last bathed and put on clean clothes just before we moved into the Line on December 10th and this was now about the middle of January, 1944. The barracks were overcrowded and many of us had to sleep on the floor but, at last, we had some heat. A couple of days after we arrived, it was found that I was suffering from Pleurisy and I was moved to the "hospital" where I was told that the Germans did not give them any medicines and all that they could do was keep me warm and in bed with a little more food than we received in the barracks. After a number of days in the hospital the medics decided that I was well enough to go back to the barracks. Several days later I was persuaded to join some of my friends and go out on a Kommando.

Again we rode in boxcars but just overnight. Arriving in **Zeitz**, we were unloaded and marched to a small farming community about three miles away named **Gleina**. 120 of us arrived at Gleina and were housed in what had been a night club, prewar. This was over the families house and barn. Our arrival there was about the third week in January and liberation came on Friday, April 13, 1944.

During our stay there we had ten die from malnutrition, giving up, and, maybe, a couple from a real illness. I was still very weak and was only sent out to work on day, having to be carried back that night. Work for the group was cleaning up a bombed-out factory. In a barn or warehouse across the road from us were about 130 British. The cooking was done by them and consisted of "coffee" (probably made from acorns) in the morning before leaving for work and "soup" made from potatoes and carrots boiled in water along with about two slices of "bread" (mostly sawdust) and more "Coffee" at night. Red Cross boxes were few and far between and always had to be divided between four or more men. The windows had been blown out in previous bombings and boards had been nailed across the openings, which stopped very little cold air. Heating was by two large stoves, which only gave heat to those close to them. As mentioned, above, I was deemed too weak to go to work and by the time of liberation almost a third of us were in that condition. During the time we were there we received NO medical help at all.

On the day before liberation we were told that we would be moved, however I and a number of others refused to be moved, despite the fact of being threatened with being shot. Finally, the guards allowed about half of the remaining 110 to stay behind. We were warned that the town would probably be shelled by the American Army that afternoon and it was but none of us was injured. The next day about noon an Armored Column liberated us but the Infantry was a day behind. That afternoon Wesley Eckblad decided to walk to Zeitz where the Infantry was. One of the companies gave us food and a bed and took us to the Aid Station the next morning.

We were moved by ambulance to a Field Hospital where I stayed for about a week, in a semi-coma. We were then moved to a hospital in France where I stayed for several weeks before being shipped to Camp Lucky Strike and then back to the U.S.A. I arrived back in Columbia, S.C., from whence my journey had begun in June of 1943, and it was now June of 1945.

Following a trip to Miami, Florida, I was shipped from the Center, there, to Ft. Lewis, Washington, from whence I was discharged on November 21, 1945.



Page last revised
James D. West
www.IndianaMilitary.org