

33 years later, GI's body comes home to N.C.

HICKORY, P. — Thirty-three years after his death in a German prison camp, Tech. 5 Thurston Hollar is coming home for military burial in his hometown.

The remains of the soldier, who died in the spring of 1945 at age 22, are being removed from a cemetery across the Belgian border from Ziegelei-Bernhard because of the efforts of a son he never knew and will be shipped to Hickory by the Army later this month.

The son, James Hollar of Columbia, S.C., enlisted the help of Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., after a

visit to the gravesite near Liege, Belgium, four years ago.

"Well, I had a long talk with him," Hollar, 34, said last week while recalling his first visit to the gravesite. "It was a very emotional time for me. And it was probably one of the best things that will ever happen to me."

Hollar joined the Army at age 16 to take a burden off his widowed mother and was sent to the German front in October 1944. He was captured by the Germans in December and the Army said he died of starvation in a prison camp in

Ziegelei-Bernhard three months later.

One of the last wishes of Hollar's mother, Alice Hollar, before her death in 1954 was to have her son returned to Hickory for burial. His wife Verita remarried after she bore Hollar's son and now lives in Aiken, S.C.

Hollar's entire outfit, the 106th Infantry Division, was captured by the Germans in St. Vith, Belgium, James Hollar said.

The family got one telegram telling that he was missing in ac-

tion and a second saying he had died as a German prisoner.

Hollar said a law passed in 1951 prohibited the return of any more bodies of World War II victims buried in Europe. But he got a waiver of the law with the help of Thurmond, and the Army is handling all transportation arrangements and will provide a military escort and color guard for the memorial service.

The body will be flown from Frankfurt, Germany, where it is now awaiting shipment, to Dover,

Del. From there, it will be brought to a funeral home in Hickory.

Members of the family say James Hollar has many of the qualities of his father.

"Some people say I'm a duplicate of him because we resemble tremendously," he said. "My father's family says I have all his qualities."

Hollar has invited surviving members of the 106th Infantry Division to attend the memorial services, when his father will be buried with full military honors, including a 48-star flag.

1978-08-24 Thurston Hollar's body returned for re-burial

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