

**1LT Arthur V. Detmers**  
**34<sup>th</sup> Infantry,**  
**133<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, Company L**  
**168<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team, Company A**



Arthur V. Detmers was born to Arthur and Helma Detmers on January 5, 1918 in Davenport, Iowa. He graduated from Davenport High School, Class of 1936, worked for a local veterinarian until he was employed as a service manager by the Toledo Scale Company.

He was a member of the Iowa National Guard, until being inducted into the army on April 14, 1941 at Fort Des Moines Iowa, and participated in the Louisiana Maneuvers of 1941 being assigned to the 34<sup>th</sup> Division, 133<sup>rd</sup> Regimental Combat Team Co. L. From a letter home, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 1941: "Camp Claiborne must be some of the country that God forgot. I never saw so much red mud in all my life." The mud and pine trees so tall that he was in disbelief, were his introduction to the South.



*Arthur with WWI Era Gear - LA Maneuvers*

He departed for the European Theater on February 19, 1942. First stop, Castle Rock, Northern Ireland where the U.S. Army Rangers were being formed, for some "Commando Training" (as he called it) and later on to England before being deployed to North Africa.

He participated in the Tunisia and Naples-Foggia Campaigns and received the European Theater of Operations Ribbon with two bronze battle stars, and was awarded the Bronze Star. It was not all over the top glory for him; after one battle he was tasked with clearing the field of all unspent munitions. It was a sizable hill of unexploded items, and the Sergeant promptly set it ablaze, the detonations were massive. The Colonel was not in the least amused.

The 133<sup>rd</sup> and other combat teams were involved in the battle for Hill 609 in Tunisia, April and May 1943. It has been said that the American Army came of age at this battle. "I was in the last hole on the left, the Germans were shooting and throwing grenades at me all day trying to get me out of my hole. I left a lot of friends there."

Sergeant Detmers was discharged from the 133<sup>rd</sup> RCT on August 12, 1943 by reason of desire to accept a battlefield commission. From the Recommendation for Appointment, June 9, 1943:

*“Sergeant Detmers, serving as Platoon Guide, has at all times been an example to, not only the men of that platoon, but the entire company. During days of actual combat, his coolness under fire was especially noteworthy.”*

<p><b>Lt. A. V. Detmers, Escaped Prisoner, Home Looking Fit</b></p> <p>Recently escaped from OFLAG 64, a Nazi prison camp in Poland,</p>	<p>where Lt. Richard Englehart was also detained, Lt. Arthur V. Detmers, son of Mr and Mrs Arthur H. Detmers, 1324 Belle avenue, arrived in Davenport at 1:30 a. m. today from St. Louis, the next to the last stop on the long route home.</p> <p>Lt. Detmers and his family talked until 5:30 a. m. today and he was sleeping when a Times representative called for an interview. His mother said that he was tired but that he was looking extremely fit and that in reviewing his experiences as a prisoner, he said that he could not complain of the treatment received. Food rations, greatly supplemented by the Red Cross, were short during the last month or so of his detention, but by the time he escaped and crossed the border into Russia, he was still in fair physical condition.</p> <p>In his conversation with his</p>	<p><b>AMUSEMENT CALENDAR</b></p> <p><b>STAGE AND SCREEN</b></p> <p>Capitol—Mickey Rooney in “National Velvet.”</p> <p>Orpheum—Abbott and Costello in “Here Come the Co-eds,” and “The Power of the Whistler.”</p> <p>Esquire—Dorothy McGuire in “A Tree Grows in Brooklyn.”</p> <p>State—“Four Jills in a Jeep.”</p> <p>Garden—“Maisie Goes to Reno,” and “The Fighting Lady.”</p> <p>Uptown—“The Great Moment” and “Take It Big.”</p> <p>Sunset—“Babes on Swing Street” and “Phantom Lady.”</p> <p><b>DANCING</b></p> <p>Coliseum—Dancing every Saturday.</p>	<p>the fact that the Russian women he saw were cheerfully performing the heaviest kind of labor in the absence of the men at the front.</p> <p>Lt. Detmers will have a 60-day leave at home before reassignment.</p> <p>He received his basic training at Camp Claiborne, La., and from there went to Ft. Dix, N. J., after which he was sent overseas, first to northern Ireland and then to England. He was in the battle of Tunisia and the battle of North Africa and later went to Italy.</p> <p>He was cited for bravery during his service in Italy and was reported missing in action in November, 1943. Taken prisoner he was liberated by the Russians last December and he arrived in the United States four weeks ago today.</p> <p>Prior to entering the army, Lt. Detmers was service manager of the Toledo Scales Co. He is a graduate of Davenport high school.</p>
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He was then transferred to the 34<sup>th</sup> Division's 168<sup>th</sup> RCT 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Co. A as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.

As the 1943 Italian campaign's 3<sup>rd</sup> crossing of the Vulturno River got underway, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 168<sup>th</sup> with Co. A at point on November 4<sup>th</sup> began the advance to Hills No. 518 and 558 to the west of Roccaravindola. Lt. Detmers and his patrol were captured by the Germans around sunup on November 5<sup>th</sup> “3 clicks E of Venefro” (time from him, date and location from his diary).

Arrived Stalag III A, Luckenwalde on November 19, departed from there on December 14<sup>th</sup>. (from his diary). His entire time at that POW camp was spent in solitary confinement. The VA psychiatric doctors later told him that his sheer hatred of his captors was what kept him alive.

On December 18, 1943 he arrived at Oflag 64, and his life as a Kriegie began. (date from diary). Part of his upbringing in Iowa was working on a family farm. Milking and feeding the cows, collecting eggs from the chickens all had to be done before school every morning. So, since the POW camp had a garden it was natural for him to work in it. From his diary, May 13, 1943: “planted 5 rows radishes, 3 rows carrots, 4 rows onions.” Gardening and playing handball, until he was too weak from low rations, was a definite improvement from Luckenwalde. But the inner fire of being captured was burning.

January 21, 1945 began the long and bitterly cold march of the Kriegies towards Germany. Wednesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, “left column at 0900 hours CHARLOTTENBURG (GER)” (diary) after asking permission to escape from Lt. Colonel John Waters, General George Patton's son-in-law. Lt. Detmers, another Kriegie (probably Robert Oshlo) and a German guard took off into the snow, moving back towards Szubin, and the advancing Russians.

Saturday the 27<sup>th</sup>, they arrived at Wirsitz and were given shelter by a Polish farming family. There were other U.S. Soldiers there that were not familiar with the warmth that live cows and hay would provide. My father reflected later that

they must have been city folk. At “1500 hours contacted reds” (diary), Lt. Detmers and others were liberated by a Russian Army patrol.

By truck and railroad boxcar the Lt. with other soldiers and officers were gradually moved towards Odessa. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March of 1945, his diary says:

*“arrived in Odessa 0800 hrs. Left train and marched 3 hrs. to billets on sea. On to Circassia, Istanbul, the Straights of Messina then on Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April the Port of Naples 0630 hrs. Disemb. approx. 1100 hrs. Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April at the Hotel Terme in Naples. Finally, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 1945, home.”*



*Arthur on leave after captivity*

It was a quiet and uneventful 2 months, no doubt very much appreciated by the soldier and his family, and after leave was finished, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Detmers went on to his next assignment at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Little Rock Arkansas.

He assumed his duties as an Infantry Unit Commander of the 186 1<sup>st</sup> SCU , training 35 men for over eight months. His responsibilities included administration, supply and employment of unit for combat. The theater of war they were preparing for was revealed years later, the Pacific, invasion of Japan. He was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant on September 18, 1945.

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Detmers was separated from the Army with an Honorable Discharge on December 9, 1945 at Camp Robinson. He was offered a permanent rank of Captain if he would agree to stay, but he felt his luck had run out, and it was time to leave.

(Writers note: When he recounted the time after capture that he was packed shoulder to shoulder in a railroad cattle car with scores of officers and enlisted men, and the car was strafed by Allied aircraft, it left a definite impression. Also, he was engaged at this time, and there were numerous family pressures from each side concerning the future goings-on.)



*Arthur & Jean on Wedding Day*

Back in Davenport the now civilian Arthur “Art” Detmers went back to work for the Toledo Scale Company and resumed a more normal, and much quieter life. On May 28, 1946 he married the girl next door Miss Jean R. Winegar. Actually, she was the girl across the street, but close enough. After the honeymoon the newlyweds relocated to Jacksonville, Florida.

The first of three children Kathleen, was born there. A transfer to Tampa a few years later was where they had me, Thomas, then back to Jacksonville and Eric, the baby of the family, was born. One thing the war did, it made a generation willing and able to move around the country and see new places.

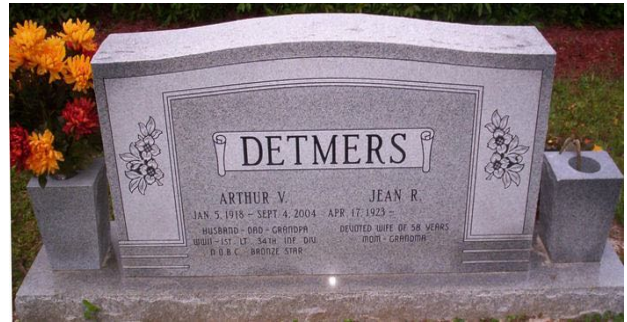


*Arthur & Jean – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

Art spent his entire career with Toledo Scales. Those were the days of loyalty upwards as well as downwards (mostly anyway). He was a technician, sales manager, office manager, distributor, a district and then a regional manager for Toledo Scales. A much higher promotion was derailed due to his wife having a serious illness.

Transfers moved Jean, Art and Eric to Atlanta, Georgia and finally to the home office in Toledo, Ohio where he would retire in November of 1983. They would return to the warmer climate of Jacksonville and rejoin myself and my sister in 1985, where they would live out the rest of their lives.

Art would go on to meet his comrades of Company L, 133<sup>rd</sup> RCT in September 2004. Those were the soldiers he most wanted to be remembered with, “every one of them should have received a Silver Star” he once told me. Jean would rejoin him in April 2011. Over half a century of marriage with all the “Better or Worse” they could desire, they would be both an inspiration and a trial to their children. And that is all anyone could ask.



#### Writers note:

On behalf of my brother and sister I would like to thank the Polish People for their bravery and fortitude in extending shelter to the Allied soldiers, and more personally our father, during World War II. Faced with extreme retribution if caught, they nonetheless did what was necessary to give aid where it was needed at a time when it was needed most.

We would also like to thank Bill and Elodie Caldwell, Lórien Kelly and Chris Weatherford for preserving the Kriegies story, and Mariusz Winiecki and the City of Szubin for their untiring help in making sure that this small piece of history does not fade into the past.

Written by Tom Detmers, son of Arthur Detmers