

2nd Lt. Howard Kenneth Hinds

104th Inf Div, 414th Inf. Co. E

Howard Kenneth Hinds was born October 3, 1914, to William Timothy Hinds and Algia Jane Holder Hinds in Loving, Oklahoma. He was the eighth child and fourth son of W.T. and Algia. He graduated from Poteau High School, Poteau, Oklahoma, in 1933. He worked briefly as a cook, then at a car dealership in Tulsa, but in 1936 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was sent to Camp Jackson, South Carolina, for Basic Training.



Howard at Basic Training in Camp Jackson. Howard is 2nd row from the top, 5th from left

During his training, he qualified Expert with the M1, Expert with a carbine, MM (Marksman) with a pistol, and MM with the BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle).

Between 1937 and 1942, Hinds had two major duty assignments. First he served with the Quartermaster Training Center, C Co, 20th INF. in Ft Francis Warren, Wyoming.

By 1941, Hinds was in Ft. Ray, Sitka, Alaska, with the Alaska Harbor Defense. Sitka was the site of a radar aircraft spotting station and anti-aircraft defense group. Due to service in Alaska during the Japanese attacks and occupation of Attu and Kiska, Hinds was awarded the American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one Bronze Service Star.



In 1943, Hinds was assigned to Ft Benning, Georgia, to Officer Candidate School. Subsequently, he served as Training Officer in Camp Adair, Oregon with the 104th INF Div., 414th Inf., before transferring to Ft Carson, Colorado, for training prior to deployment. The 104th had been activated on Sept 15, 1942, and arrived in the European Theatre through Cherbourg on Sept 7, 1944, that is D+91 after D-Day. If they had arrived on continent within 90 days of D-Day, the 104th would have received a D-Day Medal.

The first elements of the 104th entered combat on Oct 23, 1944. Only 27 members of the 104th suffered capture by the enemy, Howard was one of those 27. The 104th

suffered over 7,000 casualties, with 1294 killed and 5,305 wounded. Men missing totaled 385. The Bronze Star was awarded to 1,869 men of the 104th; Howard received a Bronze Star.



104th Timberwolf Patch

After arrival in Theatre, they were transported by rail car to company Headquarters; the command post was at Westmalle or Oostmalle, Antwerp, Belgium.

Lt. Hinds was assigned to night fighting and reconnaissance as platoon leader, Co. E. On or about October 25, 1944, Lt. Hinds and Co. E was sent out on a mission to find, and place the location of the German Nazi Troops in the Belgium countryside near Antwerp. Lt. Hinds and his platoon came back and reported the enemy was well hidden in the timber just beyond the Wurstwezel - Breda main road. The 104th, though an American infantry, was under the British Field Marshal Montgomery. The Brits had reported no German troops were close to the area. So instead of believing Lt. Hinds and Co. E, the commander of the 414th believed British intelligence. Co E was ordered out again the next night October 26, 1944. The first attack took place near the customs house on the Wurstwezel - Breda road.

In the ditches on the side of the road during the first attack, Lt. Hinds spent much of his time crawling back and forth re-assuring the younger soldiers that reinforcements were coming and they would all be ok. The machine gun fire was so intense and the roar of the artillery barrage kept the soldiers low. They could see the fire power coming from the tree line, right where Co. E had reported their position on the 25th. Lt. Hinds was knocked unconscious by an exploding artillery shell. He was awakened the next morning by the butt of a Nazi K-98. Some of the young soldiers were killed, some were wounded, a few escaped, and Lt. Hinds and 13 others were taken prisoner. Indeed, Lt. Hinds and his Co E had been correct. The enemy was close at hand.

This photo of a photo in the 104th Timberwolves Museum in Breda, Belgium, depicts what the ditch may have looked like in 1944; the photo on the right shows what the exact ditch looked like in 2011.



Hinds was taken first to Amersfoort Camp in Belgium and quickly transferred to Fallingbostal Camp in Germany, where he was interrogated for 2 weeks. From Fallingbostal he was taken by rail car to Oflag 64 in

Poland. Due to a Polish coin found in his possession at the time of capture, the Germans thought Lt. Hinds was a Polish spy. After arriving in Oflag 64 he was kept in solitary confinement and was not released until just before Christmas. There is little information of his stay at Oflag 64, except that he lost approximately 50 lbs. in 6 months.

There were occasional Red Cross supplies – in one instance, the Red Cross sent ice skates – not exactly needed. The German guards as a joke removed all the right foot skates before giving them to the prisoners. The fact that the Red Cross sent ice skates to POWs was a joke in itself.

January 1945, was the coldest winter on record. The Russian Army was closing in on Poland from the east. Starting on January 21, 1945, seven columns of POWs were marched from Oflag 64 west to various Stalags in East Germany, over 350 miles. Through the deep winter snow, sleeping in hay barns, cow sheds, or on frozen ground, they marched not knowing their fate. They often lacked adequate drinking water and rations were sparse. Lt. Hinds' column was marched to Stalag III A near Lukenwalde, Germany.

After arrival at Stalag IIIA, Hinds understood that the Russians would soon overtake the camp. When they did, the Russian army commandeered all the rations and any blankets/clothing for their troops. The POWs were not released; the area was in chaos and possibly such a large release of unarmed men could have doomed most of them to death. The Russians informed the Senior American officer that all prisoners would be kept in the compound, not liberated, and if any tried to escape they would be shot. He was also informed that the POWs were soon to be evacuated to the Port of Odessa on the Black Sea to be released to the American government there. Hinds made the decision that he did not want to remain in Russian custody and certainly did not want to go east to Odessa. At an opportune moment, Hinds recognized a gap in a fence and ran for freedom. He said later he could hear footfalls behind him and thought surely he would be shot or at least tackled. After scurrying under the fence, he found that he was followed by a French Lieutenant, also not wanting to be in Russian custody and seizing the same opportunity to escape the camp. This was April 1945. After a good run, they were able to steal some bicycles. Daddy had never ridden a bicycle but quickly learned. He and the Frenchman could not communicate except by hand gestures. They traveled by night to evade both Germans and Russians. To the delight of Lt. Hinds, the first American troops he came across were members of the 104th infantry. He was repatriated near Leipzig, Germany on May 5 1945. At the time of his repatriation, the Command Post for the 104th was at Delitz, Westphalia, Germany.



Lt. Hinds soon after rejoining his unit.

Lt Hinds was promoted to Capt. later in 1945, and subsequently to Major.

During Hinds Army service he was awarded the following:

- Bronze Star,
- Good Conduct Medal with Clasp
- Presidential Unit Emblem
- American Defense Service Medal
- American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one Bronze Service Star
- European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with Three Bronze Service Stars
- WW II Victory Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Korean Service Medal With Two Bronze Service Stars
- Combat Infantryman Badge
- United Nations Service Medal
- Honorable Service Lapel Button WW II
- Expert Badge with Rifle Bar
- POW Medal

Following is the repatriation de-brief, taken in August 1945, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, after Lt. Hinds was stateside.

REMARKS (Use additional sheets if necessary)

On 26 Oct 44, my platoon was given a reconnaissance mission to determine the strength and location of enemy in the northeastern part of Belgium and western Holland near the small town of Breda. The mission was completed and the information returned to my battalion headquarters. On the night of 26 Oct, my battalion received the order to make a night attack on the positions which I had reconnoitered. The route of approach was selected by the battalion commander who disregarded the information that I had brought back from the reconnaissance. The route he selected was directly into the most heavily fortified sector of the enemy line and even though I tried to argue a change of course, I could not persuade him to change the route he had selected. The enemy was estimated at one company of infantry which was deployed under good cover and in prepared positions on flat ground. Their machine guns were arranged to form an interlacing path of fire in the sector we were attacking. My platoon led the attack at 2300 hours 26 Oct 44 and upon approaching the enemy lines we received heavy small arms fire. My platoon suffered heavy casualties and the remainder was kept pinned down by continuous fire. Our supporting artillery opened fire on the enemy positions and I was within the impact area. I was dazed by the concussion of our artillery and sometime before daybreak, I was picked up by two enemy riflemen. I was taken to their regimental CP for interrogation and later transferred to concentration camps further inside Germany. Five enlisted men, the only remaining members of my platoon, were captured with me. Liberated 21 Apr 45 by the Russians at Luckenwalde. Returned to US control 6 May 45 when we contacted Co A, 47 Inf, 9 Div.

This is a complete statement of all the pertinent facts of the circumstances surrounding my capture and return to military control, and I have no further information to offer in this connection.

Howard K. Hinds

INDORSEMENTS HOWARD K. HINDS, 2d Lt., Inf

1st Indorsement AG&SF REDIST STATION, Hot Springs, Ark. 23 Aug 45.

TO: COMMANDING GENERAL, 8th SvC, Dallas 2, Texas.

Forwarded.

FOR THE COMMANDING OFFICER:

Robert A. Barr

ROBERT A. BARR, 1st Lt., AUS
Adjutant

2nd Indorsement Hq, Eighth Service Command, ASF, Dallas 2, Texas

TO: The Adjutant General, Washington 25, D. C.

Approved in compliance with par 18¹ WD Ltr AG 383.6 (31 May 45), O.P.S.A. SFBAM-M,
22 Jun 45, subject: Change No. 2 to POW, as amended.

FOR THE COMMANDING GENERAL:

On Dec 8, 1945, Lt. Hinds married Mattye Gwendolyn Butler Hinds in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. Together they raised 5 children, 4 girls and one boy.



Hinds completed a 27 yr. commitment to the U.S. Army. After service in Europe, Hinds was sent to Japan with the Army of Occupation. From the end of the Japanese occupation of Korea until the official start of the Korean War, hostile engagements were taking place between South Korea and communists from the north. Capt. Hinds was deployed from Japan to Korea in 1948, with the 129 Trng BN 23rd INF Reg. He was there with a group of several hundred U.S. advisers and training officers to train the South Korean Army. These are photos from service in

Korea. The patch he is wearing is that of the 1st Corps (I Corps); concentric circles black, then white with a black center circle. The photo was probably winter 1948.



Other assignments during his 27 year career included Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, Ft. Bliss, Texas, Ft Hood, Texas, and Ft. Chaffee, Arkansas as well as an additional deployment to Ulm, Germany in 1960, with the 45th INF Div. in Ulm, Germany.

The deployment to Germany was just a short 15 years after the end of WWII, and that was still fresh in Hinds memory. In mid-August 1961, the Autobahn was clogged with convoys of U.S. troops and materiel heading east from Ulm and all parts of West Germany; Hinds spent 3 weeks during the summer of 1961, at the East German border when the Berlin Wall was built. This was a defining event of the Cold War.

After retirement from the Army in November, 1962, Hinds served his fellow veterans as the American Legion Service Officer at the V.A. Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He earned a college degree during that period from Rose State College.

Howard K. Hinds loved to fish; he died on 29 June 1979, drowned while fishing at his lake house on Lake Eufaula, Oklahoma. He is buried, with his wife Mattye, at Post Cemetery on Ft. Sill, Lawton, Oklahoma.

Howard served proudly and with honor.



Biography written by Susan Hinds Howard in collaboration with her siblings.