



Carroll Higginbotham
1020 Tiffany Dr.
Fallon, NV 89406-3829

EX-POW AT
HAMMELBURG, MARCH 1945
CAPT. BAUM WILL ALWAYS
BE REMEMBERED.

Higgin

Winter 1944-45

Memories of an Ex-Prisoner of War

by Carroll A. Higginbotham
Bishop, California

Captured by the Germans on December 19, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge near Bastogne, Belgium, I was a medical sergeant. I was kept on the front lines for two days, treating American and German wounded. We were marched to Bitburg, Germany, along with some men from the 101st Airborne Division. We stayed in Bitburg two weeks, with bombing nearly every day and often at night. On December 24th, mid-morning, we were hit by heavy bombing and I was knocked out. When I came to I had to dig my way out. Capt. C.F. Anderson, medical officer, was with me and both of us were banged up with bruises and scratches. I had a sprain in the lower sector of my back. Capt. Anderson, Henry Barrett, Paul Carlson and myself removed many other wounded from the rubble.

About January 1, 1945, we had another heavy bombing, killing American and German wounded. Capt. Anderson, Barrett, Carlson and myself ran into a concrete basement and layed next to a wall. After the bombing we came out and the German guards lined us up and told us that they were going to shoot us to equal the number of Germans killed. I was sure this was the end — I am sure we were all praying. We begged the Germans not to kill us. One of the Americans started to run and they caught him and beat him. I don't know what happened next, except that I think our prayers were answered! After this they marched us to a cemetery in Bitburg and had us digging graves with pick and shovel all night, without food. With a painful back and bruises, it was a night I will never forget.

We were marched from Bitburg to Witlich and, as we passed through small villages, we were hit by rocks from kids and teenagers. Those small rocks hurt when they hit you on the head. Some of the POWs cried when they were hit and couldn't defend themselves. Food was very scarce and our weight was going down each day. We slept outside of Witlich and the next morning we were put on the road to march toward Limburg.

Each day I was getting weaker from hunger, along with the others. I caught a bad cold, along with diarrhea and became quite weak. My knees began to swell and I went aside and layed down along the road in the snow. I was so tired I fell asleep. Henry Barrett and Al Prencik came along and saw me in the

snow, and they picked me up and took me to an old shed along the road with the permission of the German guard. They put their blankets around me and exercised my legs to get the blood circulating and assisted me all the way to Limburg.

Before we reached Limburg, my feet began to swell and I had to remove my shoes and wrap my feet in rags. By the time we arrived in Limburg I had watery blisters on my feet and they were *most painful*. After reaching Limburg, I was put in a barracks with one blanket and there was no heat. We received a can of grass soup with one slice of bread each day.

We finally met up with our other enemy — the German lice — and no POW will ever forget them, as they could really bite and drink your blood.

At Limburg, many of us were put in boxcars on a train to leave, and before the train moved the railyard was bombed, leaving many injured. Capt. Anderson was in one of those cars that was hit and received schrapnel wounds to his right arm. I gave him first aid before he was taken away. After the bombing we were put on the road again toward Frankfort and it was a long, painful march for me and many others. On our arrival at Frankfurt we were put in boxcars in a railyard and left for four days without food or water. We broke icicles from the roof of the cars to help on our water supply. When we were taken from the boxcars we were put on the road again toward Hammelburg. During this march we were strafed again by P-51s. We reached Hammelburg the early part of February and were put in barracks with no heat. Some of the POWs had severe colds, including myself, that developed into pneumonia. A few of them are buried in the cemetery at Hammelburg.

The German lice were still with us and the Germans tried to delouse us by giving us hot showers and putting our clothes and blankets through some special unit. In the meantime we had to stand in the cold, naked, until our clothes were done. This led to the deaths of a couple more POWs who were buried in the cemetery at Hammelburg. We decided after this that if any lice were present we would keep it a secret and not tell the Germans.

On our arrival at Hammelburg I met Capt. McGhee, medical officer. He checked my chest cold and said that I had possible pneumonia and frostbite on my feet. I was restricted to a bed for about two weeks. When I was able enough to move around, Capt. McGhee and Col. Danitch, a Serbian medical officer, took me with them on their rounds in XIII-C, Hammelburg. They put me in charge of a room in XIII-C for the sick and wounded. We had no medical supplies and about all that I could do was to make hot tea and be a nurse maid.

Soon after the middle of March 1945, another

WINTER 1944-45, cont'd...

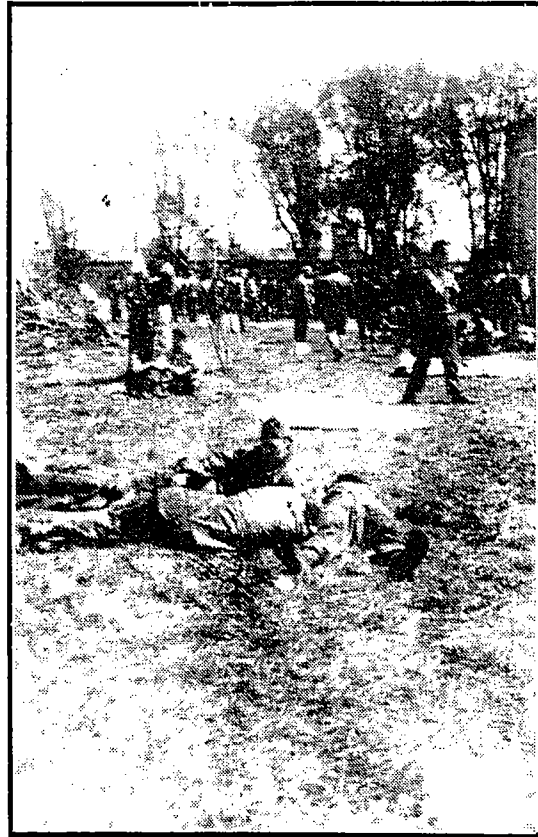
group of POWs arrived at XIII-C, led by Col. Goode and Lt. Col. Waters. They had marched all the way from Poland. Col. Goode tried to get everyone to look and act like soldiers again. I don't think there was much success.

Toward the end of March 1945, we could hear gun fire and it was getting closer fast. In about one hour, U.S. Army tanks and half-tracks started coming in. I was with Capt. McGhee and Col. Goode, who gave orders for everyone to stay in the buildings and under cover. We were very happy, thinking freedom had come to us. To our disappointment, it didn't.

The tanks and half-tracks had to get back to the American lines as soon as possible before the Germans could counterattack. They left with many POWs following them with the half-tracks full. In a few hours they had been recaptured and returned to Hammelburg. Word came to Capt. McGhee that Lt. Col. Waters had been shot by a German guard and we thought that many more of us would be killed.

We were put on the road again, this time toward Nuremburg, and it was another long and tiresome march. When we arrived at the camp in Nuremburg, we were given a hot bowl of soup. We remained over night and were put on the road again early in the morning, toward Regensburg. About five miles south of Nuremburg we heard the bombers coming and we could see the city of Nuremburg getting a terrific bombing. We could also see P-51s coming, so we quickly decided to take everything that we had to make a POW sign on the ground. One P-51 sighted our sign and tilted his wings. They check on us every day until we reached Moosburg. The march

was slow and rough, as all of us were weak from hunger. When we arrived at Regensburg, I thought it was the end for me — I was too weak to walk and my feet and knees had given out. I didn't care anymore, so I just layed down. Al Prencik and Henry Barrett picked me up and assisted the balance of the way to Moosburg.



Just waiting our turn to fly out.



Having a good meal for a change.