

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF CLAIM

1993

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SS# 185-18-2317

I was drafted into the Army and went on active duty December 11, 1943.

I was sent to Fort Eustis, Virginia. After 17 weeks of training, half of the troops went to Fort Leonard Wood, and the other half went to Camp Livingston, La., for 17 weeks of infantry training.

I was with the 86th Division from May through September 1944. I was sent to Camp Kilmer for overseas shipment and left the USA on 24th September 1944 for Europe. At Camp Kilmer I met a GI by the name of Foxx-I don't remember his first name. We went over on the Queen Elizabeth, approximately 16,000 troops were on that ship. In six days we were in Scotland.

Foxx and I managed to stay together to the end. We were captured in the same town. We were with a Calvary outfit for a while, and then to another replacement Depot. Finally we were assigned to the 28th Infantry division. We relieved the 8th Division in the Huertgen Forest around 1st of November 1944. We were told we were approximately 35 miles from Cologne, Germany.

We were told to double up with a GI who was there and stay there for the night. I went to this small oval shaped bunker and ask this GI to move over, there was no answer. I did this several times. Finally I started to pull on his feet and noticed he was stiff, I then realized he was dead and pulled him out-he was a Sgt. He was probably killed by shrapnel from tree bursts. I crawled into his bunker for the night. The next morning we went down a road and crossed it and were told to dig out fox holes and cover them with tree branches. The trees were all torn up from shrapnel which exploded at tree top level.

We used our bayonets to cut tree limbs 4-5 inches thick to cover us. We went on contact patrol to check on other positions. We saw GI's bring prisoners back through our lines. The biggest problem was the weather. Our leggings were no good-wet and stiff-nobody used them. Our shoes were wet and so were our sox and feet. I had an extra pair of sox and changed them, and rubbed my feet for circulation-my buddy did the same-in this way we saved our feet. We were told many troops had trench feet and were loosing their toes.

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I remember Nov 11, 1944, Armistice Day we had approx 5-6 inches of snow on the ground. We left the Forest and went by trucks to the town of Hosingen, Luxemburg. We arrived there before Thanksgiving Day. We had turkey for Thanksgiving Day.

We went on patrols down to a river and saw a few Germans near a bunker playing soccer. We took a few shots at them and watched them run into their bunker. We did this several times. On the third time we were surprised by them, The Germans were in the next hedgerow and were firing right at us. We had to run about 75 Yds to some wood piles for cover. We kept firing at them while one at a time we ran for the wood pile. No one was shot but I had bullets go by and one went in my field jacket. The LT. had his heel of his shoe shot off but did not hit his foot. We knew better but was told intelligence wanted more information and a prisoner.

We were told that we were going to make a big push after Christmas. One day we saw this German soldier come walking in to surrender, he was clean shaven and spoke good english. Said he was a school teacher, and that there was going to be a big German offensive before Christmas. He was taken to a Company Commander and we never heard or saw him again. This was about a week before the attack on 16th of December.

Sgt. Foxx, three other GI's and I were in this farm house about 100 yds from the main town. We kept watch on the area toward the river. We could hear heavy vehicle noises for a week or longer and at night there were flares shot up by the Germans, nothing was done or said about this.

On the morning of December 16, 1944 the Germans let loose with everything they had. The 88's screaming overhead hitting the town. The town was on fire. We jumped up off the floor and into the fox holes outside. We could hear the Germans but could not see them. The fires from the town made it light to see around us for a while. I was in a fox hole with a fellow-named-Findley-from North Carolina.

I looked up and saw 2 Germans crawling towards us- I shot both of them. Sgt. Foxx was behind me in his fox hole with a GI by the name of Epstein. All of a sudden I heard the Bar go off and saw this German, he was an officer-dead as hell. Epstein had shot him. It was foggy and this German did not know where he was.

When it was daylight everything settled down-no more Germans were seen. Later in the day two American tanks came into town, I stayed in town, the other one parked by the farm house. These GI's were black troops, they never came out of the tank and we never talked with them. That night coming back from the kitchen in town to our post out stepped a German officer in our path.

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We had our rifles on him but he just kept pulling out his pistol, and was shot dead. I do not know who shot him. The next day, the 17th of December 1944 nothing happened until the afternoon when we saw a German Tiger Tank on a hill about 700-800 yds away. The GI Tank Commander saw it too because he pulled out of there and headed for the main town. That evening we started to pull back into the town. We had to run a short distance in the open and had a few shots taken at us. Frenchy was hit in the side, kept on going, the medics took him and I never saw him after that.

That night December 17, 1944 we were told that we were going to surrender in the morning. I was talking to this SGT-nice guy from Texas-he ask that I call him "TEX" when we heard this news. He walked away crying and so did I. I never expected that something like this would happen.

Next morning December 18, 1944 we surrendered. We were in an open field just outside of town. We were lined up in several rows. The German troops came along side some GI's and looked at their shoes, if they were their size and new looking they made them take them off. The German shoes were in terrible shape-walking with toes out. I saw what was happening and was standing in some mud and water, I walked in a puddle of water and covered my shoes with mud until they looked bad, and I kept my shoes. The Germans also took your cigarettes, watches and rings. whatever you had.

The Germans had several machine guns on us and were going to shoot us, just then a German staff car with a General officer came and had us moved toward the German lines. If he had come five minutes later we would have all been dead.

We walked for 3 days-about 100 miles through the German lines, with nothing to eat or drink. One day we were in an open field and were told to turn in our field jacket or overcoat. I kept my field jacket. This day was nice and clear and while we were resting we could see American B-17 Bombers flying over head. We could see black puffs from anti aircraft guns. Also there were fighter planes and we saw several parachutes open up. Everyone was watching this when suddenly we saw this fighter plane coming right at us, it was an american P-47 with its guns firing at us. No one saw the pilot bale out, so we thought he was dead in the cock pit, and his hands were on his trigger, or the guns were firing by themselves, or he thought we were Germans, and he was going to shoot what he could. We were in German territory.

The plane crashed about 1-2 hundred yards away, we saw German civilians running toward the crash. I do not know how many GI's were hit-1 fellow near me was hit.

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We moved out and later were put in box-cars, 60-80 men to a car. You had to sit up-no more room. We received water every other day, drank out of our steel helmets. We received 1 small package of hard crackers, 1 packate for 3 men. That was all the food we received. We spent Christmas in the box cars and were in there for 7-8 days. While we were in these box cars we were parked in some railroad yards--could have been near Frankford.

One afternoon we heard planes coming toward us. SGT FOXX & I Stood up and saw 2 B-17 coming toward us. The planes were shot up and flying low and slow. Then had a few bombs left because they let them go on the yard and cars with us in the cars. What a helpless feeling to be trapped and you cannot do anything. The guards left for shelter. We were told that 1 car was hit and killed some GI's.

I do not blame the bombers for any of this-they were doing their job. Shortly after this we arrived at the Camp. We were at a station and town called BAD-ORB about 35 miles from Frankford. The Camp was called STALAG IXB. We walked to the camp-not far about a mile up the road, passed 1 Bldg-The Headquarters Bldg then into Camp.

We were processed in and given German dog-tags-I do not know where mine is to this day-my mother had-I saw them, but left them with her-Mv mother is now in a nursing home and I cannot locate the dog tags. I was moved into a barracks with some GI's but it was filled mostly with officers from the 106th Division. There was 1 COL, the rest were Capt's & LT's.

All they did was talk about what went wrong. I remember the Germans taking our picture, A LT & I together. The camera was a kodak and was on a tripod. We were in Camp about a week or less when the Germans moved the officers and NCO's out of the Camp to another Camp. My friend Sgt FOXX went with them. I felt ^{sad} about him leaving. He should have stayed since he did not have Sgt's stripes on his jacket. I never thought of this at that time. I still think of him to this day and wonder what happened to him.

There were 300 troops in each barracks, the bunks were 3 high there was only straw in the mattresses. Each morning 2 men went to the mess hall and picked up a wooden barell of hot colored water-it was supposed to be tea-I think-no sugar-no nothing. For lunch we went to the window at the kitchen and received a laddle of hot water with some beet or turnip tops-no seasoning. Once in a while you could find a piece of blackened potato. You used your steel helmet to eat out of. For supper-we had 1 loaf of bread for 7 men. The bread was soggy and made with sawdust-I do not know how it was cut but seemed equally divided.

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This was our menu for 3½ months that we were there. We were starving and all we could think of was food. My weight was about 100 lbs.. Everyone had lice and scabbies and some of the troops just remained in their bunks-too weak to walk. I went outside with one fellow from Virginia-we walked around the fence almost every day. This man said he was a salesman for Pittsburg Paint & Glass. We were buddies and talked about what we were going to do when we got out.

We received two Red Cross boxes while we were there. The first box had to be divided between 4 men. The second box had to be divided between 13 men. We were told that these boxes were given to us by Yugoslavia. Red Cross. One day in February while standing outside in the afternoon we heard planes and saw machine gun fire, and a German plane fly low over the camp and behind him was an American plane firing at him. We heard a loud noise and assumed the German plane was shot down. The next morning we saw a dead horse by the kitchen and later it disappeared. Probably killed by the plane's machine guns.

At noon we were receiving our usual soup when a fellow in front of me, who slept near me, was given the horse's head, plus his soup. The head was just a skeleton, but it had some gristle on it. He was chewing on it all afternoon, he was a happy GI.

We had evening head count around 5:00 P.-M. before dark and then locked up. The lights were turned on and off by the guards. The windows were covered up and you could hear the noise from the bombing by the British planes, they were bombing Frankfurt. Some GI's were pulling the covers from the windows and could see the sky light up in the distance.

Nothing much happened except that we were getting weaker and thinner each day. One night we were awakened, lights turned on, and German soldiers with rifles and bayonets took everyone outside. We were lined up and they were checking our hands and clothes for blood stains. We were told that someone had beaten a German guard at the kitchen, and he was in serious condition. The only officers left with us was the Chaplain and a Medical officer. The Germans were threatening to shoot some GI's unless we turned over to them the ones responsible for beating the guard. There was 1 German civilian in a black trench coat who seemed to be in charge-Gestapo-I think.

The next day 2 GI's ^{MY} in barracks across the isle were responsible and were taken to the office, they had charges brought against them and would be punished by the American Army. Nothing more was heard or said about this. I am sure the Chaplain kept close watch over this.

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During the last month in camp we could hear the noise from the fighting, getting closer and closer. Finally we could hear the firing of weapons near the camp. On April 1st, 1945- Easter Sunday, the American troops of the 4th Division, 7th Army, came through the gate. A very happy day!

A field hospital was set up in town and the sick were taken there for treatment. I left Stalag the following day and was given a shower and sprayed with DDT, and given clean clothes. We were taken by planes-C 47 to France, to a large Tent City, called Camp Lucky Strike. We stayed there for 10-14 days eating and resting. We were near LeHarve, France. We boarded a ship, called SS Argentina. We were told that this ship was carrying War Brides to the USA. We did not see them-they were on the top deck-off limits. The only GI's I saw were PW'S and wounded American soldiers.

While at this Camp-Lucky Strike we read that President Roosevelt had died. We read this in the Stars and Stripes.

We arrived in New York May 5th 1945 and were taken to Camp Kilmer, where we had a steak dinner. We were given a 60 day leave and told to report back to a hotel on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. I was happy to be home and see my family. None of my home town buddies were home they were still overseas. After being home for several weeks I saw this soldier walking toward me, he was an old friend, I had gone to school with his brothers. He was on a convalescence leave. His jaw was wired closed but he was doing O. K. He said he had been shot by a sniper some place in Europe. He was 1 2nd LT, and was given a battle field commission. He was a great football player to us younger guys, he was 10/12 years older than me.

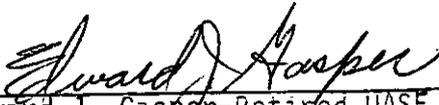
We had gas ration coupons-but no car. We had 90 gallons of gas coupons. We were on the highway hitchhiking to Morgan-Town, West VA, which was approximately 28 miles away.

I returned to Atlantic City in July 1945 and stayed there for about a week. We were in a very nice Hotel on the boardwalk. We were treated very nice-it was first class. We went to personnel and was ask to tell what happened. They did not have any records of us. I gave my name, rank, serial #, organization, and a list of what had been taken from me by the Germans. I did not mention that I was a prisoner of War-I thought they knew this. Nothing was written in my records about being a prisoner of War.

I was sent to Indiantown Gap Military Reservation, PA. I was there from approx 16th of July 1945 to my discharge on Nov 18, 1945.

As my records indicate I went back in the Army for 4 more years, and then went in the Air Force for 20½ more years.

I never talked about my Army life in World War two and being a prisoner of war. I do not blame the Army for what happened to me. We were fighting a war and I did my very best for my Country.


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