



EXHIBIT 2

This exhibit is a copy of an original photograph of the German Staff Officers and Guard Complement at Stalag IX B, Bad Orb, Germany, obtained by Louis Leon Novashinski, "Pfc., ASN 12025338" from a desk in the officers' barracks at Stalag IX B, Bad Orb, Germany on 4 April 1945. The commandant at Stalag IX B, Bad Orb, Germany is the first man in the front row, reading from left to right.

RG 153 Box 34  
BK 2 (Folder 1)  
100-425

Martha resident Howard F. Skaggs :

# World War II POW tells of captivity in German camp

**Editor's Note:** Martha native Howard F. Skaggs was 21-years-old when he joined the U. S. Army in 1942. He spent two years in stateside training and work before being incorporated into the Army's 100th Infantry Division.

In 1944, Skaggs and the 100th Infantry Division were transported by ship to Marseilles, France, and were immediately transferred to the front lines of World War II.

It was the fall of the year and for the next four months Skaggs and his division fought throughout much of France. Skaggs spent day after day standing in foxholes full of icy water.

On January 9, 1945, Skaggs, along with 15 to 20 other Americans, was captured by German soldiers near Rimling, France.

Skaggs and other captured American soldiers were transported by train to Bad Orb, Germany and the prison camp known as Stalag 9B.

The following is the story of Skaggs capture and imprisonment. The story was written by Skaggs' wife, Arline Burton Skaggs, as told to her by her husband.

The story is published in recognition of National POW Recognition Day on Monday, April 9.

## The Story of My Capture January 9, 1945

One pitch dark night while on guard duty near Rimling, France, from my foxhole I heard German soldiers and tanks coming over a hill toward me. I could barely see, but the extreme noise from many tanks and screaming Germans made me understand my only chance was to move on.

I made my way off this hill - alone - to an abandoned house on the edge of the village. Here I remained until the Germans circled around and came down the main street toward the house where I was hidden. I stayed until they got to the house, then ran to a back window which I knocked out - jumped through and ran down a street until I came to an American Jeep parked in front of a building. I went into this building which happened to be our Company headquarters. Luckily for me others of my company were there.

That night the Germans took their tanks away leaving their soldiers there in the town. The next morning I watched from this house the Germans set up a machine gun across the street from us. The Americans captured a great number of these Germans and sent them back as prisoners. There I learned that there had been 12 tanks and 200 German soldiers in the attack the previous night.

These Germans told us of a much bigger attack that was planned for the next night which we found to be true.

Our tanks had been sent to another front leaving us with only small arms. Our captain asked for more reinforcement or to let us move back to the main line of defense. This lie was denied and we were not allowed to go back. Late that afternoon the captain left in a jeep saying he was going for supplies, but we never saw him again. Years later I learned that this captain survived the war but lost one of his feet, which led to eventual suicide.

That night - about midnight - the Germans came with tanks.

They blew off the back part of the building we were in, then came to the front door and captured those of us who were left. Approximately 15 to 20 American men. Here they took the sheepskin liner from my coat leaving me only the outer shell.

We were walked to the top of the snow covered hill overlooking Rimling where several German tanks were parked. We were made to lie down around the tanks which were being fired upon by our American artillery. I was hit by shrapnel, but not seriously injured. Since we were not killed by our own artillery, they took us across a snow-covered mountain where German soldiers on snowmobiles were patrolling. From there we were taken to a house where we were interrogated. After much questioning, they took all of our belongings of any value.

From this house we were taken to an abandoned German army camp where we spent the night. The next morning we were loaded on a train in a crowded cattle car where many more soldiers who had been captured were being transported.

This was very bitter cold zero winter weather and we were moved by this train for five days and five nights with no food or water. We were allowed out of the cattle car one time to relieve ourselves down by the Rhine River. As we marched down a street of Frankfurt to the riverbank we were spit upon by the German people along the street.

(I must tell you - the other times we relieved ourselves on this train was beside the door. If this had not been zero weather, sanitary conditions would have been almost unbearable. This train traveled by night and was parked on a siding during daylight.)

We were then reloaded to travel the rest of the journey to Bad Orb, Germany. We were then walked to the top of a hill to Stalag 9B prison camp, where thousands of prisoners were already incarcerated.

The guards at the gate said, "With your conditions here, you may last six months. It is a slow process to death."

For a bed we had a very small amount of excelsior (wood shavings) on the floor with a thin blanket over it. For food we had to divide into groups of eight men. This group had one steel helmet and one spoon to share for eating. Each morning we had boiled bark water to drink from the helmet. At noon a few small ladles of soup were put into our helmet to share. It was very thin with little food value to it. At evening we were given one loaf of bread which we cut into eight pieces and sometimes (not often) we had a small spoonful of marmalade. When spring came and I could find dandelion roots I would cook them in an old tin can I had found. I believe the strength from these dandelions saved my life. Our group received one one-man Red Cross package while I was incarcerated. This we divided among the eight of us.

The camp conditions were unbelievably unbearable. We were covered with body lice. We wore the same dirty clothing the entire time but were deloused twice. Then we were allowed to take a bath under a cold shower with no soap. This bath was very weakening.

For heat in our large building there was one wood-burning stove in the center. Only two armloads of wood each day were allowed to be burned in it. The building was always cold. We saw men being carried out each day - dead.

I will never understand how I survived except for the fact that I was liberated before I had to stay the six months. I lost more than one-fourth of my body weight and was so weak I had to be assisted to walk up stair steps.

One of my worst experiences during my months of captivity happened after a German guard was killed in the mess hall one night. The next morning all prisoners were taken out and made to stand in lines in the snow. The guards were trying to determine who had committed the murder by examining our clothing for blood. When they didn't find blood, they began counting off preparing to shoot some of us. Their reasoning was that after killing 15 or 20 of us someone would confess.

Finally our interpreters persuaded them to let us go back inside and they would help find the guilty person. This they did - a man from another barracks had killed the guard for food. He was taken away, but we

(Please turn to page two)

## planned Yatesvil

Rep. Rocky A Hook, announced that a plan to construct Pleasant Ridge Dam recreational included in the state plan.

The project was million in state funds which will match Engineers' contribution funding.

"I am very pleased inclusion of this year plan," Adkins spent a lot of time state matching funds tant access road. I tively open up the recreational area development which the future of Law

"Tourism is an been developed to

(Please

## Levitt Roe ticket

The question of the 10 ton Creek Road, will be addressed in Court last Wednesday postponed indefinitely Development (overweight load

Harvey Levitt, urer of Roe Company, paid tickets issued by department of Transportation was acting on behalf of Roe Creek Lane in the overweight

## Fiscal met in session

The Lawrence Court met in a session to consider the timent for p

The court agreed John Deere contract with Highways at a plus freight.

The court also timent for bid an end loader during a special month.

Finally, the Skaggs as a county salary of \$6 per

County Judge Johns and Marion, Harold D and Ishmael S dance Friday.

## World War II . . .

(Continued from page one)

never knew . . .

Another very scary experience for us happened on a day which was a little warmer so we had gone outside the barracks. A German plane and an American fighter plane got into a dogfight over our camp. Bullets hit the ground all around us as the planes flew back and forth and strafed us. I know of only one prisoner who was killed in this attack.

One late afternoon during the first week in April, I heard the sounds of small arms being fired which I recognized to be American guns. Later the German guards came to our barracks and told us that American troops were close by and they asked us to tell the troops when they came in that we were treated well by them and that they would like to be taken prisoner by the Americans.

A large white suit of underwear was tied on a pole on top of a building near the gate to denote their surrender. The next morning I saw tanks of The First Cavalry Division roll through the barbed wire fences, but there were no Germans to be seen. They seemed to have left camp the night before.

The next step in our release from this POW camp was the order of removal, the weakest being taken away first. We were given c-rations and were removed as fast as transportation was available. My turn came about four days later. Very sick from trying to eat after months of starvation, I was taken by truck to a mobile bath unit near the town of Bad Orb. We removed our filthy clothing and tossed them into a fire, then for our first bath, after which we were sprayed for lice. After this delousing we were given clothes. By the time my turn came all coats were gone so I left by plane for Camp Lucky Strike wearing a blanket for a coat.

After several days at Camp Lucky Strike and plenty of cooked food to regain some strength we were sent to LaHarve to board the John Erickson, a hospital ship, for a trip across the English Channel to Liverpool, Eng-

land. There we picked up a group of USO show people who furnished entertainment during our voyage to New York. I was very ill during the fifteen days at sea. The thrill of seeing the Statue of Liberty on our arrival is one I'll never forget.

From the New York harbor I was sent to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. After a few days to gain more strength I went to Camp Adabery, Indiana. Then I was furloughed to home at Martha, Kentucky, for a thirty-day leave.

My family had previously been notified that I was MIA (missing in action), then months later that a group of POWs (prisoners of war) had been released and that there was a possibility that I could be one of the group. Otherwise they knew nothing until I walked in my mother's front door for a surprise happy reunion.

From home I went by train to a port in Miami, Florida, for thirty days of rest and relaxation. From Miami I reported to Ft. Benning, Georgia, as a radioman for a Tank Training Company.

I was discharged December 1945, at Fort Knox, Kentucky, having earned the American Theater Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, World War II Victory Medal, European African Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with two bronze SV stars. I have since been awarded a POW Medal.

I returned to the same position at Ashland Oil Inc. that I had before service duty, with whom I stayed until my retirement in March 1971 after 46 years of service as a Production and Exploration Foreman.

I am now enjoying life with my wife, Arline Burton Skaggs, to whom I was married in October 1947. I spend my time taking care of my children and my herd of Polled Hereford cattle. I am an active member of the Elizabeth Baptist Church of Martha and the Bluegrass Chapter No. 100 of the POWs. I also enjoy attending reunions of my 100th Infantry Division and especially seeing my friends in Company F and Stalag 9B.



Howard Skaggs  
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