

I Am Proud To Be a Veteran

By Stephen Korba

I am proud to be a Veteran, getting through war as a prisoner of war to the Germans. After graduating from Neville High School I enlisted in the Army Air Force. They sent me to Texas to be a mechanic. Then off to Las Vegas to Gunnery School. In 1943, the crew was assembled of 10 men in Kansas for B-17 Bomber training.

They sent us to Thurleigh (a B-17 Air Base north of London). At the end of 1943, we were called to bomb Kiel, the submarine base in the North Sea. We were shot down during the mission, the flak got us and had two engines on fire and we had to leave formation. We were told there were 900 planes on that mission. We landed in 4 feet of water near the Island of Sylt. The Island was right there and was full of German soldiers that came running and shooting over our heads. They searched us and took everything away from us including our flight jackets. Then a small boat picked us up and put us down the hold. They took us to the seaport of Emden Germany and 18 days we survived on bread and water as the Germans tried to get military information, 12 days in a Boxcar and then 3 weeks in Mooseburgh. I got a dose of lice from another prisoner. Then they opened up Stalag XVIIIB and put 4100 American soldier prisoners together.

We were there 17 months, the absence of normalcy, especially on holidays, made the men extremely creative~~~on Thanksgiving we ate horsemeat and potatoes and 3 men got sick from eating fermented raisins. Jerry Soup was often the main source of food for the men. This soup consisted of potatoes, hot water, some grass, rutabagas, dehydrated cabbage. To this day, I still hate rutabagas. On December 1 1944, we received half parcels of food from the Red Cross. What a place to be on your birthday! In March a bout of typhus hit the Russian Side of the Camp and 11 men died.

In April for 30 days straight, we were marched out of Kermes, as the Allied Forces approached the area. The 6th Armor Division liberated us and they took us to the Seaport in France on the Queen Mary under the Article of War back to the United States. We landed in Camp Shanks in New York. In New York, we were there for 38 days eating Eggnogs. We were flown to Texas and were to be schooled on B-29s, but the A-Bomb was dropped and the war was over. I came out of the Service as a Technical Sergeant.