

POW

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3rd Division.

They fought against the wily Field Marshall Rommel, and the German air force at that time was able to strafe and bomb them at will. They got through that winter, complete with frostbites, and were pulled out after Christmas for 10 days leave in Naples. Then came bloody Anzio, and next, "almost" Rome. Eddie said, "We could have made it but we were held up. I think it was political, but they said a superior force of eight divisions faced us."

During that stalemate, Eddie and seven others took cover in a deserted house for the night. Their company was scattered and they knew German tanks were nearby. They had tried to get an anti-tank unit to help but failed. At daylight they heard the sounds of two Tiger tanks coming to a halt in front, then all was silent until a voice called out in English, "Come out now! You will not be hurt."

And that was that. They filed outside, were lined up between two Germans armed with burp guns and nasty looks, told to strip, and lost all their cigarettes and candy, although Eddie was left with, as he remembers it, a half-pack of Philip Morris. (He smokes to this day and has no intention of quitting.)

So on February 22, 1944, PFC Eddie Smith became POW #12059. His captors marched them to the rear of the German lines, and on the way there they were fired on several times. "Probably," says Eddie, "by both sides!" Their first destination was the notorious "Studio", a sort of POW processing plant which must have been an efficient facility, for in six days over 2,200 soldiers were captured and assigned to camps in Germany.

On the way there Eddie is certain they drove through Rome but saw nothing of that city because of canvas coverings on the trucks. At the next changeover point they were herded into the infamous (from WW I) "40 x 8" boxcars, so named because the held 40 men and eight horses.

Their final destination, Stalag VIIA, held thousands of prisoners from all over: Britons, French, Belgian, Italian, Yugoslavian and even a few Serbs. The camp had a reputation for being quite strict.

In Camp VIIA, Eddie's weight went down from 160 pounds to under 130, not surprising when considering their daily fare - half a loaf of brown bread and "grass soup," a mixture of some vegetables and water. There was seldom any meat, and when there was it called for deep mistrust because no dogs or cats were ever seen anywhere around.



THEN AND NOW - PFC Edward B. Smith in uniform, above, and today at left.

Camp discipline was rigid and strictly obeyed, even to speedily following the morning command to rise, dress and attend roll call. If any laxity showed, the guards unleashed the dreaded "Deutsche Schaferhunde," German Shepherds bred for the task. Guards were both surly and quick-tempered. Eddie says, "They would shoot at a prisoner's feet just because they felt like it."

Eddie and a dozen others were taken to a little town called Agawant - population 300 - and "farmed out" to farmers who were short of field hands. They were locked up at night but reined loosely during the day, and - best of all - the food improved for they ate whatever the farm family ate. These people, says Eddie, "showed absolutely no animosity to us, and would tune in English broadcasts for us to follow the war's progress."

In August 1945 a return to the main camp brought a welcome visit from the 10th Armored, and in the liberation ceremony following Eddie had his first taste of cognac. They then swapped places with their ex-guardians, who became POW's themselves.

Obituaries

ROSA DAVIES

Rosa B. Davies, 83, of Port Charlotte, Fla., died June 5, 1994 in South Port Nursing Center, Port Charlotte.

Born in Forty Fort, she moved to the Port Charlotte area in 1970. She was a retired bank teller and a member of First Presbyterian Church, Port Charlotte.

Surviving are a sister, Mamie Coursen, Forty Fort and two great-nieces.

Arrangements were by Roberston Funeral Home and Crematory, Port Charlotte.

ISABELLE CHILSON

Isabelle H. Chilson, 68, of Elizabeth Street, Dallas, died June 17, 1994, at home.

Born in the Hudson section of Plains Township, she was the daughter of the late John and Helen Puk Kolesar. She resided in Dallas for the past 41 years.

Prior to her retirement, she was employed as plant manager by Lori-Charles Inc. Luzerne.

She was a member of Gate of Heaven Church, Dallas.

She was preceded in death by her sister, Antoinette Sedor.

Surviving are her husband, Stanley J.; son, Stanley J., Harrisburg; sister, Celia Polachek, Wilkes-Barre and two grandchildren.

Interment, Mount Olivet, Cemetery, Carverton.

GEORGE MAURER III

George J. Maurer III, 67, of South Avenue, Harveys Lake, died June 16, 1994 at Nesbitt Memorial Hospital, Kingston.

Born in New York City, he was the son of the late Violet M. Maurer and George J. Maurer II. He was educated in New York City schools and was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II.

He was employed as a dispatcher for Gotham Sand and Stone Company, Port Washington, Long Island, NY retiring in 1984.

Since retiring he had resided at Harveys Lake and was a member of Irem Temple of Wilkes-Barre and George M. Dallas Lodge 531, F&AM, Dallas. He was also a member of Trinity United Presbyterian Church, Dallas.

Surviving are his wife, the former Ruthann Meehan; daughter, Donna J. Wetmore, Long Island, NY; sons, George J. IV, Long Island, NY; Richard K., Plantation, Fla.; five grandchildren.

Interment, Oak Lawn Cemetery, Hanover Township.

Memorial donations may be made to Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, P.O. Box 1014, Wilkes-Barre, 18703-1014.

THOMAS J. DOUGHTON SR.

Thomas J. Doughton, Sr., 76, of Davenport Street, Dallas, died June 14, 1994, at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.

Born in Edwardsville, he was the son of the late Thomas J. and Lillian Morris Doughton. He was a graduate of Edwardsville High School and had resided in Dallas for the past 41 years.

Before retiring he was employed as a letter carrier at the Kingston Post Office. He was an U.S. Army veteran of World War II, receiving the Purple Heart during the invasion of Sicily.

He was a member of American Legion Post 644, Swoyersville, and was an officer of the Back Mountain Bowling Association.

He was preceded in death by a brother, Shadrach.

He is survived by his wife, the former Bertha Dombroski; son, Thomas J., Dallas; daughters, Gail Szeliga, Apalachin, NY; Linda Murphy, Mt. Pocono; six grandchildren.

Interment, Chapel Lawn Memorial Park, Dallas.

FRED HIRNER

Fred C. Hirner, of Holly Street, Trucksville, died June 19, 1994, in Valley Crest Nursing Center, Plains Township.

Born in Kingston, he was the son of the late Harry and Elsie Mae Schoenchency Hirner. He resided in Trucksville for the past 22 years.

Prior to his retirement, he was employed as a miner in several local mining operations and was a survivor of the Knox Mine disaster. He was also in charge of maintenance for Mary Taylor's Hair and Skin Care Centers.

He attended Prince of Peace Church, Dallas.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Sally Naomi.

Surviving are grandchildren, Philip W. Taylor, with whom he resided; Frederick Taylor and Jane Bell, both of Meriden, Conn.

Private funeral services will be at the convenience of the family, from Metcalfe and Shaver Funeral Home.

Interment will be in Forty Fort Cemetery.

Memorial donations may be made to Valley Crest Auxiliary, 1551 East End Blvd., Plains Township, 18711.

MARY TOMKO

Mary Luziani Tomko of Stull Road, Noxen, died June 17, 1994, at her home.

Born in Luzerne, she was the daughter of the late Frank and Mary Marina Luziani.

Surviving are her husband, Stephen Tomko; daughter, Mary Ann O'Leary, Courtdale; two granddaughters; one grandson; sister Jenny Kazokas, Luzerne.

Interment was in St. Ignatius parish cemetery, Pringle.

MARY SAPSER

Mary E. Sapsler, 73, of St. Petersburg, Fla., formerly of the Back Mountain area died June 10, 1994, at home.

Surviving are her husband, Thomas R.; sons, James M., Daphne, Ala.; Thomas, Laffin; brother, John McGourty, Wilkes-Barre; two grandchildren.

Arrangements by the Royal Palm Funeral Chapel and Cemetery North, St. Petersburg.

LEO YASCUR

Leo "Pete" Yascur of Huntsville Road, Jackson Township, died June 18, 1994, in Mercy Hospital Hospice Center, Wilkes-Barre.

Born in Huntsville, he was the son of the late Paul and Anna Stack Yascur. He was a lifelong resident of Jackson Township and a 1941 graduate of Lehman High School.

He was a U.S. Army veteran of World War II, serving in France and North Africa.

He was a member of Gate of Heaven Church, Dallas.

He was formerly employed by Whitesell Bros., Dallas, until his retirement several years ago.

He was preceded in death by a brother, John.

Surviving are his wife, the former Margaret Polinsky; son, James, at home; daughters, Bonnie Coveski, Harveys Lake; Cindy Brin, Loyalville; Brenda Miller, Lehman Township; Wendy Yascur, Washington, D.C.; sisters, Mildred Sponseller, Wilkes-Barre; six grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

Interment, Chapel Lawn Memorial Park, Dallas.

Memorial donations may be sent to Hospice Community Care, 385 Wyoming Avenue, Kingston, 18704.

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