

A True Prisoner of War Story

Exurbs from *HELL ON EARTH*, as told by Edgar Dwain Garwood

The complete story can be read at:

<http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/pow/stalag12a.html>

This is the story of one of the many thousand men who had the misfortune of being taken prisoner of war during that great and long remembered Battle of the Belgium Bulge. This battle started, as we all remember, at Bastogne, December 16, 1944. The Germans started a great push to conquer the world and almost did a job of it until those well know Yanks came through for the final blow and put them in their place where all warlords and sick maniacs should be.

. . . . This camp was Stalag 12A at Limburg, Germany. The food situation here was slightly better and we were not forced to work. We were given blankets and allowed straw for beds. The camp had been a training station and we had latrines and even water where we could wash and shave. They gave us our first cigarettes and soap from the Red Cross packages about two weeks after we arrived. This was a real treat for most of us had not seen either since we were taken prisoner. We were interrogated again and then placed where we could not come in contact with other prisoners.

We did very little work here other than try making our barracks livable and waiting for our food. Then came the work, the Yanks had crossed the Rhine and should be there in about ten days so the Germans got us out again and loaded us on boxcars again and started out. The next day the Airforce came over and blew up the railroad and strafed our train. The guard became scared and let us out.

We shed our shirts and turned our backs to the sky forming the letters POW hoping upon their return they might recognize us as Americans and spare us. The plan worked. They came over and flipped their wings and flew away.

The Germans decided we would start walking on another forced march so at one a.m. we started out. We walked through a few towns and had not stopped for rest so we were almost exhausted. The night was dark and foggy and very cold.

Having lost about ninety pounds I became weak and decided I should either take a chance now or never and I could hear American machine gun fire so I took a long shot, worked over to the edge of the road, jumped, and rolled into the deep ditch and lay their motionless until the column passed.

Thank God they had not seen me; I was on my own. I headed for where I heard the gunfire. I had not gone far when I came onto another escapee by the name of Bigley. He had the same idea so we ventured on together. At seven a.m. we decided to try for some food and coffee at a farmhouse. We had God with us for we found a friendly woman who gave us food and coffee and warmed us behind the stove and told us the Yanks were close by. We stayed there until eight p.m. then we heard vehicles approaching. It was the 7th Armored Division. We signaled them and was taken back to Regiment Headquarters. Once again we were among friends and had immersed from the Hell on Earth. We were given food and treated like kings.

If anyone ever says things are bad in the States, let me remind then that we are living in a Utopia and not a Hell on Earth as many have witnessed during the war. So thank God you are an American and live in Heaven on Earth.

Sgt. Edgar D. Garwood