

THEODORE 'TED' JENKINS



DRAFTED INTO SERVICE FROM CAMBRIDGE, MA ON 3/18/44. ENTERED BASIC TRAINING AT CAMP BLANDING, FLORIDA. TRANSFERRED TO CAMP HOWZE IN AUGUST 1944 AND ASSIGNED TO 103D INFANTRY DIVISION, 409TH REGIMENT, D COMPANY, HEAVY WEAPONS, 1ST PLATOON MACHINE GUNNERS. ARRIVED IN MARSEILLE, FRANCE IN OCTOBER 1944. FOUGHT WITH 7TH ARMY IN SOUTHERN FRANCE AND VOSGES MOUNTAINS AS AMMO BEARER. CAPTURED AT SELESTAT ON DECEMBER 2, 1944 AT THE AGE OF 19. SURVIVED POW CAMP WHERE 25 OF 200 DIED FROM STARVATION. LIBERATED IN MAY 1945. DISCHARGED IN DECEMBER 1945. RECEIVED , , CIB, , AND MEDALS

POW

After being captured on December 2nd, 1944 in Selestat, we were herded across the Rhine and forced to dig trench emplacements for the defense of a German position. This, of course, was contrary to the Geneva Convention, but we were in no position to protest. Eventually, we were placed in box cars and made a long trip to a POW camp in Limburg, Germany (Stalag XIIA). Our diet consisted of what we called grass soup. The rumor was that when we got to a permanent camp, the diet would improve. That never happened.

Our next train ride placed us in a camp near Muhlberg (Stalag IV-B) for Christmas. On January 2, 1945, I arrived at my new home. We arrived at Kamnitz, Czechoslovakia in the Sudeten Mountains. (After the Germans were defeated, the Czech's changed the name from Kamnitz to Ceska Kamenice) By this time, there was only Don McGregor left with me from my outfit. They'd managed to scatter us out pretty good. At this location, we were stripped of our olive drab clothing. Our winter protective clothing was replaced with clothing that was inadequate, to say the least, for winters in the mountains. Many of us suffered from frostbite. We were placed in work crews and were forced to dig tunnels in the mountainside. They were attempting to construct an underground aircraft factory that would be impervious to allied bombing. Six days a week (Sundays off), we were marched to our work site several miles away. We worked 8 to 10 hours and then marched back to the camp, arriving about dark. We never received lunch and received only a piece of bread and some kohlrabi (a sort of cabbage) soup for our efforts.

Finally, on May 8th, our German guards opened the camp gates and told us we were free to go. There were no American liberators in site. We were told that we were on our own to get back to our lines, or we could wait and be liberated by the Russians. No Thanks! By this time, we were all weakened by the hard labor and sparse nourishment. However, we left the camp on May 9th and spent the next 9 days getting back into American hands. We would have never made it had it not been for the German/Czech civilians who would come out of their houses to feed us. Of the 200 of us that originally arrived at the camp, only 175 survived.