

1945 January 15-21

The 106th Division Disaster

**Report City
Men Missing**
Two Were In 106th
In European Theater



JONES

NAGLE

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 January 18, page 1)

**Five Bangor Boys Reported
Missing In Action**

Five servicemen of the Bangor community have been reported missing in action within the past week. They are S/Sgt. Jack Davis, Cpl. Charles Timm, Cpl. James Gillies, Pvt. Luther Freng and Cpl. Arthur Hundt.

(Bangor Independent, 1945 January 18, page 1)

Area Men Reported As Missing in Germany

All Were 106th Division Soldiers

The fear inspired by the German counter-offensive Dec. 16, that the next few weeks will bring news of casualties to many homes in this vicinity, was confirmed last week when several more area men were reported missing in action in Germany. The four listed as missing are Cpl Charles V. Timm, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Timm of Bangor, former Mindoro residents, Pfc. Luther W. Freng, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ingvald Freng of Burns Valley, Cpl. James D. Gilles, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Gilles of Bangor, and S/Sgt. John R. Davis, son of Mrs. Mary Davis of Bangor. All four young men were members of the ill-fated 106th Infantry division, which a German broadcast on Dec. 29 described as virtually wiped out. The broadcast claimed that the division had 11,840 men Dec. 16 but eight days later "consisted of 212 men who are wandering about the Ardennes and are perishing in the snowstorm".

Hit by Nazi Advance

The boys sailed with the division less than two months before the opening of the German counter-attack and had just gone into the line. Not a single hostile shot had been fired over their heads before the full impact of the Nazi advance hit them. They had landed in England during the first half of November, remaining there until they were sent to the Western front in Belgium.

Some more of the missing



Jack (John) Davis
(*Bangor Independent*, 1945 January 18, page 1)



TIMM
Charles Timm
(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 January 15, page 6)



FRENG
Luther Freng
(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 5, page 10)



Albert Hundt
(*Bangor Independent*, 1945 January 18, page 1)



James Gilles
(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 14, page 7)



Edward Wojahn
(Military and P.O.W. Life of Edward C. Wojahn)



Robert Milkey
(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 February 20, page 1)



Henry Wittenberg
(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 10, page 1)



JAHIMIAK

Robert Jahimiak

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 January 13, page 1)



HARNISH

Alfred Harnish

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 17, page 1)



BESL

Gerry Besl

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 30, page 1)



ATKINSON

Harry Atkinson

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 April 6)

**BILSKEMPER****Robert Bilskemper***(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 March 7, page 1)***HAYES****Otto Hayes***(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 January 16, page 1)*

When Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry was six or seven years old, she discovered her father's Army medals in a dresser drawer. Edward Wojahn deflected his daughter's questions by saying they were nothing. It was not long after World War II ended, and she thinks he had been trying to forget about his war experience and move on with his life.¹

What Wojahn was trying to protect his daughter from was the harsh experience he had been through, along with several other soldiers from La Crosse County, in the last six months of World War II.

By December 1944, it looked like the war on the Western Front might be entering its climax with the Allied armies poised to strike farther into Germany. Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower had insisted on a broad-front advance, so the Allied lines stretched 1,000 miles from the northern coast of Europe southward to neutral Switzerland. As a former British general once said, the line cannot be strong everywhere. An American Army infantry division, which included in its ranks many men from La Crosse County, would be victimized by that military axiom.

The [106th Infantry Division](#) was created in March 1943. More than 50 of its soldiers were from La Crosse County, and the average age of its 16,000 men was just 21 years old. It had the distinction of having the highest average I.Q. of any division in the United States Army.²

One of those La Crosse County men was Edward C. Wojahn. When he was still in high school in 1938, Wojahn had enlisted in the 32nd Division of the Wisconsin National Guard to earn some money. In September 1940, the 32nd Division was activated into the regular Army, and Wojahn was discharged so he could graduate from La Crosse Central High School in 1941. Wojahn was called up by the Army in March 1943. After processing at [Fort Sheridan, Illinois](#), he was sent to [Fort Jackson, South Carolina](#), to join the 81st Combat Engineers of the 106th Infantry Division.³



Shoulder patch of the 106th "Golden Lions" Infantry Division

([Nebraska State Historical Society](#))

Basic training for the 106th Infantry Division began on March 29, 1943. Edward Wojahn remembered Fort Jackson for the very hot weather and lots of hiking and tent sleeping in swamps.⁴

Basic training was followed by more training. There were regimental exercises from October 3, 1943 to January 8, 1944. Then it was on to Tennessee for maneuvers with three other divisions in rain, sleet, snow, and mud. Everyone slept on the ground in tents until April 1944.⁵

The next stop for the 106th Division was [Camp Atterbury, Indiana](#), where they remained until October 13, 1944.⁶

With their training completed, the men of the 106th began their movement to the European Theater of Operations. After a 24-hour train ride, the 106th Division arrived at [Camp Myles Standish](#) near Boston. They left there on November 9, loaded on the [USS Wakefield](#), and sailed for Europe on November 10, 1944. Their arrival in Liverpool on November 17 was followed by several moves by train and truck across England until loading on [LSTs](#) for the trip across the English Channel on November 31. After several days in Le Havre, the division departed from Rouen, France, in early December for the front lines in Schonberg, Belgium.⁷

The green American 106th Infantry Division was moved into the Ardennes Forest sector in Belgium and Germany because it was regarded as a quiet area where they could get front-line experience without much action. They relieved the [2nd Infantry Division](#) and were assigned a sector that would usually be occupied by several divisions.⁸

The Allies were taken by surprise when the Germans launched a major offensive, which became known as [The Battle of the Bulge](#), through the Ardennes with two main goals: capturing the vital port of

Antwerp and splitting the British and American armies. The ill-fated 106th Division was one of the first units to bear the brunt of the German attack.

The 106th Division started arriving on the front lines December 9, 1944. The German offensive was launched just five days later. Four German divisions smashed into the 106th. In a 1993 interview, Edward Wojahn of Onalaska said, "There was so much shooting going on in all directions that you couldn't tell where the front was."⁹

After three days of fighting against overwhelming odds, two regiments of the 106th were surrounded. Lacking artillery, armor, and air support, as well as no food or water resupply for four days, they [surrendered to the Germans](#).¹⁰ The remaining regiment of the division continued to defend the vital town of St. Vith. The "Golden Lions" of the 106th Division lost 8,663 men in the Battle of the Bulge, including 7,000 who became prisoners.¹¹ Fully 60 percent of the 106th Division's men were killed, wounded, captured, or missing in action.¹²

S.Sgt. Alfred Harnish of 1206 Logan Street in La Crosse had graduated from Logan High School in February 1942. Before being inducted into the Army, he had worked at the Allis Chalmers Manufacturing Co.¹³

In December 1944, Alfred Harnish was in the 422nd Infantry Regiment of the 106th Division. His company was dug in when an officer told them they were surrounded and cut off from supplies. After camping on a couple of different hills, Harnish's company was ordered to withdraw. His platoon, however, did not receive those orders and took up positions in a wooded area. German artillery pounded them all night. His unit was surrounded, and they surrendered at 5:00 a.m. on December 16th.¹⁴

Harnish and his fellow prisoners were loaded on boxcars and arrived in Limburg on December 22. He spent some time in a hospital and Stalag 4B before being moved to Stalag 3B for a month and one-half.¹⁵

Twenty-two-year-old Sgt. Howard M. Jones had worked at La Crosse Clean Towel before being inducted into the Army on March 17, 1943. After the 106th Division was shipped to England in November 1944, Jones's unit of engineers helped build post exchange buildings for non-commissioned officers. Later they built roads. Jones had been on the front lines for just three days when his small group of men were caught between American and German lines. They surrendered at noon on December 18, 1944.¹⁶

Edward Wojahn's 81st Combat Engineers went to the aid of the 423rd Anti-Tank Company to hold [Bleialf, Germany](#), as it was under attack. On the morning of December 17, the German attackers overwhelmed the first and second platoons of the 81st and took Bleialf. The third platoon was almost out of ammunition and withdrew with its wounded. Wojahn and his comrades took turns carrying a wounded officer on a stretcher.¹⁷ But by the end of the day on December 18, this group was surrounded and had no food or water. The company commander surrendered his men to the Germans just before nightfall on December 18, 1944. It was Edward Wojahn's 22nd birthday.¹⁸

The Germans stripped the Americans of watches, mittens, and food before putting them in the basement of a house for the night. The next morning, they joined 2,000 other captured Americans

marching in “mud up to our knees” to a nearby town.¹⁹ Edward Wojahn recalled, “The line of prisoners was so long that if you was in the middle of it, you couldn’t see the front end to the back end, and if anybody got to so weak and tired and hungry that they could walk no more, they wanted to lay down on the side of the road, the German guards just shot them there.”²⁰ When they reached Gerolstein, Germany, the prisoners were loaded on boxcars for transport to [Muhlberg, Germany](#).²¹

Ed Wojahn, whose grandparents ironically came from Germany to the United States, was now a prisoner in his ancestral homeland. He was joined there by numerous comrades from the 106th Division, including his childhood friend, Ed Nagle.²² In fact, Wojahn and Nagle were in the same platoon.²³

Another La Crosse man who was captured with the 106th Division men was S.Sgt. Robert Bilskemper. His group of prisoners walked 45 miles to a railyard. During their five-day trip to Bad Orb, American aircraft destroyed the locomotive pulling their train. Their only food on the train was two meals consisting of black bread.²⁴



Just some of the American POWs taken at the Battle of the Bulge

[\(Imperial War Museum\)](#)

Robert Milkey of La Crosse was in the 590th Field Artillery Battalion supporting the 423rd Infantry Regiment of the 106th Division near Bleialf, Germany. When the 590th Field Artillery surrendered to the Germans at 9:00 a.m. on December 19th, Milkey and three of his comrades escaped to join the 423rd Infantry. After fighting all day, the commander of the 423rd Infantry surrendered to the Germans at 7:00 p.m. Milkey joined about 1,600 men who walked out under the white flag of surrender. They slept outside in a barnyard in a small town that first night. They marched to Gerolstein, Germany, the next morning for a meal of biscuits and cheese. There they loaded on boxcars for transport to Limburg. The POWs were endangered when the railyard was bombed two days before Christmas. After a five-day train trip that started on Christmas Day, the Americans entered Stalag 4B near Muhlberg for processing and interrogation. Stalag 4B held British POWs, so after a week the Americans were moved to another prison camp at Furstenberg.²⁵

Gerry Besl of 426 Avon Street in La Crosse had graduated from Aquinas High School in June 1942. He was working at the Heileman Brewery Co. when he was inducted into the Army.²⁶

Besl, a member of the 422nd Infantry Regiment, was with a group of 1,000 men who gathered on a hill. They were cut off and surrounded by the Germans. A German officer gave them a surrender ultimatum on December 20.²⁷ Besl recalled many years later that some Germans came to their lines in a captured American [Jeep](#) under a white flag. "We thought they were surrendering." The Germans took an American colonel back to their emplacements to show off the tanks and artillery pieces that were surrounding the hill. When the colonel came back, he said there was no point in any further resistance. The Americans destroyed as much of their equipment as they could before capitulating.²⁸

At 8:00 a.m. the next day, Besl and the other Americans surrendered and were marched all day to an old school house. On December 24, they were taken to the railyard at Gerolstein. Bombing and strafing by American planes damaged the railway so badly that the POWs had to walk to [Koblenz](#). After three weeks in Stalag 4B, they were sent to another city in Germany. Besl recalled, "Someone had misinterpreted the orders and so we sat around there two weeks before going to [Merseburg](#) to fill in bomb craters. Food was pretty scarce."²⁹

In the middle of January 1945, the families of Jack Davis, Charles Timm, James Gilles, and Luther Freng, all of Bangor, and Howard Jones and Edward Nagle of La Crosse, were being notified that their men were missing in action. The day after Phyllis Timm received the telegram about her husband, she gave birth to a daughter.³⁰

The former Eileen (Everson) Hundt was notified that her husband, Corporal Albert Hundt, 26, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Hundt of Middle Ridge, had been missing in action in Germany since December 16.³¹

More telegrams brought bad news to other families in La Crosse. Mr. and Mrs. Herman Olson of 727 George Street were informed that their nephew, Pvt. Otto E. Hayes, who had worked at Trane Company and the Montgomery Ward store before Army induction, was among the missing from the 106th Division.³² S.Sgt. Robert H. Bilskemper was also reported missing in action in Germany since December 21, his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George F. Bilskemper of 919 Vine Street, learned. Bilskemper was a 1942 graduate of Aquinas High School and had worked at the A & P supermarket before his Army induction.³³

Mr. and Mrs. Harry V. Atkinson of 527 N. 9th Street found out their son, T4 Harry D. Atkinson, who was in a medical unit with the 106th Division, had been missing in Germany since December 21. The younger Atkinson had worked at Northern Engraving before going into the Army. Pfc. Henry Wittenberg, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Wittenberg of 1308 Charles Street, had graduated from Logan High School in June 1941. He had worked at the Heileman Brewing Co. before his induction. Now Henry Wittenberg was missing in Germany too.³⁴

Wittenberg's unit had been captured, but he and a couple of other men escaped to join another American unit for two more days before that unit was forced to surrender on December 21.³⁵

During the Battle of the Bulge, German forces captured nearly 23,000 American soldiers.³⁶ The sheer number of prisoners challenged the ability of the Germans to feed, transport, and house all of them.

Edward Wojahn was with a group of prisoners who were confined in a railroad car from December 22, 1944, to January 2, 1945, because there was no room for them in a POW camp. They sang Christmas carols to take their minds off the lack of food and water. British aircraft bombed the rail yard, unwittingly killing some American prisoners of war. During his time in the railroad car, Wojahn said he had only a half a loaf of bread to eat.³⁷ Sixty or more American POWs were crowded into each railroad car that had been designed to hold 40 people. They all shared a five-gallon bucket as their toilet.³⁸

Charles Timm was captured on December 19 near [St. Vith](#). His group of prisoners marched 150 miles to Stalag 12B near [Luneburg, Germany](#). According to Timm, "Between Christmas and New Years they were given one bowl of soup." On January 2, 1945, they arrived at Stalag 12B for a two-day stay before being loaded on boxcars and being transported to Stalag 8A.³⁹

Also arriving at his camp, Stalag 4B, on January 2, was Edward Wojahn.⁴⁰ He was so weak that he could barely stand upright. After a cold shower with no soap, the men put their dirty clothes back on.⁴¹ British POWs searched and interrogated the newly-arrived American prisoners.⁴²

Howard Jones's group of American prisoners traveled to their camp in stages. They were marched three days to St. Vith. Their move to Gerolstein, Germany, was in railroad boxcars. The Germans took all of their valuables and identification. The Americans finally got some food after going without any for two-and-one-half days;hardtack and cheese that had to be shared among six men. Then it was back on boxcars for an eight-day trip to [Bad Orb, Germany](#), that ended on December 28. The prisoners were marched from the railyard in the town to Stalag 9B. Jones recalled "one old man shaking his fist at us."⁴³ That evening each group of six men were given some tea and a loaf of bread with margarine. The light work around the camp included peeling potatoes. On January 25, the Americans were again loaded on boxcars for an 18-hour transfer to Stalag 9A at [Ziegenhain](#).⁴⁴ S.Sgt. Jack Davis of Bangor was in the same group.⁴⁵

After the captured soldiers reached prisoner-of-war camps, news of their fate started to trickle back to their loved ones.

T4 Robert Milkey was the son of Alta Garske, 1019 S. 10th Street, La Crosse. His wife, Beverly, lived at 802 ½ 5th Avenue South with their four-month-old son, Robert Anthony.⁴⁶ He wrote a letter to relatives on January 3, 1945 stating that he was in a German POW camp.⁴⁷ This was the first communication from the missing men of the 106th Division, so his letter gave hope to other families of men in the 106th.

In the letter to his wife, Beverly (Lauterbach) Milkey, he wrote:

I hope this reaches you before the notice 'missing in action.' I don't want you to worry. I am fine and am getting plenty to eat and have a warm place to sleep. We are quartered with a number of British soldiers and they sure are swell. They have set up a system of exchange and for money they use cigarettes and food. I want you to go to the Red Cross and find out how much and what you can send me.⁴⁸

Shortly after his wife received this note, Robert Milkey was moved to a different prison camp. On February 30, 1945, his group of prisoners started a seven-day, 115-mile walk to Stalag 3A. During those seven days, each man had just a loaf of bread and a small piece of cheese to sustain him. When they walked 26 hours without a break, one of the Americans sat down to rest. An SS trooper ordered him to get on his feet and keep walking. When the GI replied in German, the SS man shot him in the head for his perceived insolence and kicked his body off the road as Milkey watched in horror. Others who could not walk the full distance were hauled on trucks. On this trek, Milkey also saw many political prisoners and Jews marching along the roads. He saw a Jew knocked down and beaten with a shovel for not walking fast enough.⁴⁹

Alfred Harnish was in the same group of POWs walking to Stalag 3A. "I saw the Nazis beat a Jew, then take him off to the side of the road and shoot him."⁵⁰

Sgt. Howard Jones wrote a postcard on January 16 that reached his sister, Mrs. Winfred L. Littlejohn, at 319 ½ North 13th Street the second week in March.

I am doing fine. I do really miss all of you now. You don't know how much I want to be with you. I have been making a lot of plans for my return home. We shall all have a great deal of fun. . . . All of my love to you all.⁵¹

In early March, Mr. and Mrs. George F. Bilskemper of La Crosse received an update from the War Department that their son, Robert, was a prisoner of war.⁵²

By the middle of March, two postcards from Corporal Charles V. Timm reached his wife, the former Phyllis McClintock of Bangor, that confirmed he was a prisoner of war in Germany. Timm asked about their daughter, Charlotte Valeria, who had been born on January 12, one day before he was reported missing in action.⁵³ He wrote that he was well and asked his wife to inquire with the Red Cross about sending packages. Timm was interned at Stalag 4B near Muhlberg, Germany.⁵⁴ He wrote, "Be home some day. Tell everyone hello for me. Remember about Red Cross." These two postcards were the first messages his wife had received from him since he landed in Europe as part of the reconnaissance unit of the 106th Division.⁵⁵

It was a letter in March from a fellow POW that informed Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Harnish that their son, Alfred D., was a prisoner of war. D. W. Robinson, who had been a POW since September 1943, wrote:

Early this month I had the pleasure of meeting your son, A. D. Harnish whilst he was passing through the stalag. He was naturally worried about your reception of the news concerning him and I offered to write at the first opportunity and reassure you of his safety. . . . Al was unwounded, full of beans and fast settling down to his new life. The fighting he had done seems to have left no marks and as is always with POW's he was more concerned about the folks at home than about his own welfare. He has left here now and there may be a little time elapse before you hear from him again, though he has written from here. Well, I hope this letter has done at least part of its job and helped to smooth any qualms in your mind. If in the future you find time to write and let me know how he is I would appreciate it. Meanwhile 'wish him all the best from---"Robin."⁵⁶

News also came in the middle of March that Sgt. John R. Davis, Corporal James D. Gilles, and Corporal Albert Hundt were also prisoners of war in Germany. A letter to Davis's mother, Mary Davis, stated that Gilles had been slightly wounded. Davis wrote, "We are getting enough food but it has changed a lot from what it was." Davis appealed to his family to send as much food as they could, especially sweets.⁵⁷ Davis also wrote, "I have nothing much to do except plan for the future and read the Bible and I like to do both."⁵⁸

The news must have been a relief to Albert Hundt's wife, Eileen (Everson). They had been married on February 20, 1943, in Lawton, Oklahoma.⁵⁹

Pvt. Gerry Besl wrote a card to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Besl of 426 Avon Street, on January 10, but they did not receive it until the end of March. "I can't write much but I'm feeling fine and hope you are also. How are Dick and Don (his brothers). I suppose Gary (a nephew) is getting big." This brief message was confirmation for them that their son was a prisoner of war.⁶⁰

Mr. and Mrs. George Gilles of Bangor finally received a letter from their son, Corporal James D. Gilles, in early April that confirmed he was a prisoner of war.⁶¹ "He wrote that he was praying for the day of liberation," and he asked his parents to send him food---"anything edible."⁶²

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wojahn of 1222 S. 7th Street received no news about their missing son until they received a card in early April. "Dear Folks and Herbert [younger brother]: God Bless You, my dear ones. I am safe and o. k. God is with me so don't worry. Just send me one package. I hope I am home before it gets there. Boy, I sure will love home when I see it. Food is all I dream of. God bless you. Ed."⁶³

Harry Atkinson wrote a card from Germany on January 10, but it did not reach his parents until March 28. It was their first indication that he was safe.

Dear Folks---I am well and am being treated well. I hope things are the same with you. There are plenty of things you can send me, mostly things to eat. You can send a 10-pound package of food and clothing every 60 days, plus six cartons of cigarettes a month. See Red Cross about

sending clothing and food which I want. Write as soon and as much as you can. Don't worry, Harry.⁶⁴

A card dated January 10 from Robert Jahimiak stated that he was a prisoner of war but in good health. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Jahimiak of 516 Farnam Street, did not get the card until almost the middle of April.⁶⁵

In a letter mailed from a German POW camp on January 21 but not received until the second week in April, Corporal Edward J. Nagle, Jr. wrote to his wife, Elrose (Murphy) of 1222 Kane Street, that he was imprisoned in the same camp as Henry Wittenberg, Alfred Harnish, Ed Wojahn, and Bob Moelke, all from the 106th Division. Wittenberg and his wife, Shirley (Temp), had a five-month-old daughter named Judith Ann at home at 2202 S. 17th Street.⁶⁶ These men were in Stalag 4B near Leipzig.⁶⁷

One of the missing Bangor soldiers, Pfc. Luther Freng, sent a card to a friend in Indianapolis, Clara Mae Robinson, who he had met while stationed at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, that was received about the same time. Freng wrote that he was in a German prison camp but feeling fine, and he told Miss Robinson not to worry. Robinson wrote a letter to Mrs. Ingvald Freng of Bangor about the card from her son.⁶⁸

Another Bangor man with the 106th Division, who was not mentioned in previous newspaper articles, was Pfc. Marlin Schultz. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Schultz, received a card from him on April 13 stating that he was a prisoner in Stalag 4B.⁶⁹ He stated that he was fine, and he asked them to send food, especially candy and nuts.⁷⁰

Besides the lack of freedom, food was uppermost in the minds of the men. Gerry Besl remembered being constantly hungry during his five months as a prisoner of war. They were fed just once a day; the evening meal usually consisted of "soup, a slice of bread, and a small piece of cheese." "You tried to save some of it for the next day," he said. The 1943 Aquinas High School graduate went from about 160 pounds down to 104 pounds before he was released.⁷¹



Stalag Luft 1, near Barth, Germany, was for airmen

[\(392nd Bomb Group\)](#)

At Stalag 9A in Ziegenhein, Howard Jones of La Crosse and Jack Davis of Bangor were part of the American contingent in a camp also composed of Russians, French, and Poles.⁷² Stalag 9A contained 1,279 American prisoners, mostly non-commissioned officers, out of its population of 5,000.⁷³

They were fed regularly in the camp, but the food was inadequate. The Americans did manage to obtain some Red Cross packages from the French. Jones said, "We were given a liter [about 34 ounces] of soup each day and one-sixth of a large loaf of bread. We talked of nothing but food during those months and the men sat by the hour and dreamed of recipes." Howard Jones lost 50 pounds during his imprisonment.⁷⁴

The food was bad, so Red Cross parcels were what kept some of the men alive. The contents of the parcels were used as currency for bartering in the camps. Because the POWs got just enough food to stay alive, the non-commissioned officers refused to work. They would go out on a work detail and just sit down.⁷⁵

Two other local men imprisoned in Stalag 9A were Corporal Albert Hundt of Middle Ridge and Robert Bilskemper of La Crosse. At the time of their capture, Hundt had helped carry James Gilles to a makeshift hospital.⁷⁶ The prisoners survived on 800 to 1,000 calories per day provided by just bread and soup. Bilskemper lost 45 pounds on this diet.⁷⁷

Besides the constant obsession with food, the men at Stalag 9A did have a few other diversions. They had a radio hidden in their barracks, and nightly British broadcasts brought them war news. Some men gave lectures about their travels, experiences in the war, and on academic subjects. Jack Davis recalled an Austrian-born Jew who had been in a concentration camp early in the war, escaped, traveled to the United States, and joined the Army. Now a prisoner of the Germans again, this man was especially valuable as an interpreter because he could speak six languages. On occasion, he would also go over the fence at night to contact the underground.⁷⁸ The Americans were able to borrow 300 books from the English prisoners. One of the books was about agriculture, and it was written by a professor at the University of Wisconsin who Jack Davis knew from his enrollment in the College of Agriculture before entering military service.⁷⁹

At Stalag 3A, Robert Milkey and his companions "slept 400 men to a tent 120 feet 11 long. There was straw on the ground and the place was lousy with fleas and lice."⁸⁰

Because he had wood working skills, Edward Wojahn was sent to work in a furniture factory about 15 miles from Dresden from January 15 to April 1. While he was there, Wojahn had to bury one of his comrades when the man died of starvation.⁸¹ Their ration for the day was a cup of coffee in the morning and in the evening, one-seventh of a loaf of bread, and watery soup.⁸² Wojahn worked with two Germans putting furniture together from wood that had originally been intended for ammunition crates. When American and British bombers attacked [Dresden](#) around-the-clock on February 13-14, the fires in Dresden, fifteen miles away, made it light enough to read a newspaper at night inside their barracks.⁸³

Ironically, by the time loved ones learned that their men were prisoners in late March and early April 1945, some of them were already being freed as camps started to be overrun by the Allies advancing into Germany.

The American [6th Armored Division](#) rolled into Stalag 9B and captured the handful of German guards who had been left behind.⁸⁴ Sgt. Howard Jones of La Crosse was one of those freed at Stalag 9B on March 30.⁸⁵ S.Sgt. Robert H. Bilskemper of La Crosse was another POW liberated there and transported to France. Bilskemper wrote to his parents about the “wonderful food which the released prisoners are getting in France.”⁸⁶

When news broke that the 6th Armored Division had liberated 1,277 [American] prisoners of war, some of them who had been captured in the Battle of the Bulge, it raised hopes that S.Sgt. Jack Davis had also been freed.⁸⁷ But any celebration for Davis was premature, however, because he had been moved from Bad Orb to another prison camp near Ziegenhain. The War Department informed his mother on April 30 that Jack Davis was liberated from the latter on April 18. Davis himself wrote to her that he had lost 60 pounds during his captivity.⁸⁸

The liberation of Stalag 9A at Ziegenhain featured acts of individual and collective courage by the prisoners of war. An article in [Collier's](#) magazine told the story, and it was recounted by the *Bangor Independent*:

When by listening to their hidden radio, the men learned that the sixth armored division was rolling their way, they started singing to the tune of “John Brown’s Body” a parody that one of them made up. It began, “O, Georgie Patton, won’t you come and set us free?” The Germans, too, heard that the 6th was headed that way and decided to move. They told all the 5000 prisoners in camp that they would be moved next day. The British, French and Russians did not complain, but the leader of the Americans was a determined medical officer, Capt. Morgan, of a famous airborne unit. He had been captured near Holland when he chose to remain behind to care for a group of badly wounded men. This battalion surgeon told the American prisoners to stage a mass sick call. Every man was to fall down and act as though the victim of some ailment. In the morning they were lined up and told to prepare to move. Some of the men ate soap and foamed at the mouth while some collapsed on the floor pressing their sides and screaming. The medical officer went to the German prison commandant and said, “Sir, your treatment is killing my men. They are all flat on their backs today.” The German commandant went into a rage. Several times he had the American medical officer backed up against the wall, threatening to kill him. But there was nothing he could do about the prisoners, short of a mass execution and at last he gave in and decided to leave them there. That was just what the Americans wanted.⁸⁹

Due to a shortage of transportation, Stalag 9A’s liberated prisoners of war had to stay in the camp for nine days before being taken to France. Jack Davis then spent two weeks in a hospital in France. William Jefferson, a released POW from Sparta who had also been in the 106th Division, had a batch of *La Crosse Tribune* newspapers that he shared with Davis. One of those newspapers had a photo and an article about Davis’s mother learning that her son was a prisoner of war. Since he had received no mail while in

German captivity, this was the first time Davis knew that his family was informed of his status as a POW.⁹⁰

Stalag 4B near Dresden was overrun in the middle of April. Sgt. Robert S. Jahimiak wrote on April 15 that he had been free for a few days, and it was good to be back with the United States Army.⁹¹ Another La Crosse man who was released when the Russians took the camp was Pvt. Otto Hayes.⁹² It was early July before Hayes was on his way back to the United States for a 60-day furlough.⁹³

Because American troops were threatening Merseburg from the west, Gerry Besl and his comrades were moved about April 18. The Germans kept them marching east for days until they ran into the Russians. At 6 a.m. on April 24, they started marching for Wurzen. About noon, the column was overtaken by American soldiers of the [69th Infantry Division](#). They shared [K-rations](#) with the hungry POWs before trucking the men to Nuremberg, then to Merseburg, and finally by plane to Le Havre.⁹⁴

Russian soldiers liberated Stalag 3A on April 21, and Corporal Edward J. Nagle, Jr., of La Crosse, was free. He was evacuated by American troops on May 6.⁹⁵

Alfred Harnish, another prisoner at Stalag 3A, stayed in the camp after liberation by the Russians until May 5. Tired of waiting for the Americans to show up, he walked 37 miles to Wittenburg where he hitched a ride on an American truck to a former Luftwaffe barracks at Hildeschen, Germany. Following five days there, he got a plane ride to Le Havre.⁹⁶ In a letter to his parents, he wrote:

It seems like years and years since I have written a letter on this kind of paper but here goes anyway. I am now in American hands again and believe I feel like shaking hands with every Yank I see. . . . We are in Germany Luftwaffe barracks right next to the air field. I think my group will be on its way to Paris tomorrow. I am just fine and raring to go. I have a lot of things I could tell you about but I'd rather wait till I get home because it would take up too much paper. I guess most of it was good experience in one way but I know I would rather be inexperienced. . . . The [C-47s](#) are beginning to roll in. I see nine overhead now. I sure missed everyone. During all the tough times I always kept in fairly good spirits because I know that one of these days I'd be free again. I weigh 170 pounds again. At one time I think I weighed about 145. I just found out that we are not going to Paris but are flying directly to LaHavre, France and then loading on a boat. Good deal. I sure will be glad to see you all again.⁹⁷

A letter from Sgt. Edward Nagle at about the same time informed Mrs. Robert Milkey of La Crosse that her husband had been liberated on April 21.⁹⁸ Milkey also got tired of waiting around Stalag 3A and set out on foot to Bitterfield, 53 miles away, on May 4. It took him seven days of walking. Milkey found American soldiers of the [9th Infantry Division](#) near the [Elbe River](#), and they took him to Holley. Then he was flown to Le Havre, France, to catch a ship home.⁹⁹ It was almost the middle of October before Milkey was discharged at Fort Lewis, Washington.¹⁰⁰

Two La Crosse men of the 106th were freed with the liberation of Stalag 8A in late April.

In a letter to his parents, Harry Atkinson wrote: "Dear Folks: At last I am writing you again. I am in a hospital in France recuperating. I am fine but still a little weak for writing. This isn't a permanent address so don't write me until I can write you again."¹⁰¹

Henry Wittenberg was in a hospital in England after losing 60 pounds during his captivity. He had worked on a German railroad for three months and had spent a month in a [POW] hospital.¹⁰²

Wittenberg, an All-City basketball player before graduating from La Crosse Logan High School in 1941, was being held prisoner "in an old beer hall at Dresden" when he was liberated in May 1945.¹⁰³ After he returned to La Crosse, Wittenberg said the Germans made them repair railroad tracks from 4:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Then the meal for the day was a bowl of soup and a sixth of a loaf of bread. The prisoners had slept on boards and straw with a piece of canvas for a blanket. Once they had to watch two Americans being beaten with clubs and rifle butts for stealing food; the men survived but could not walk for a few weeks. As for the German people, Wittenberg said at the time, "Some of them gave us food, beer and pop once in a while . . . Others spit at us and threw rocks. I don't (sic) ever want anything to do with them again."¹⁰⁴



—Tribune Photo
Pfc. Henry Wittenberg saw his nine-months-old daughter, Judith Ann, for the first time since she was six weeks old when he arrived home for a weekend recently. With them is his wife, the former Shirley Temp. Wittenberg, a member of the 106th division, worked for three months on a railroad near Leipzig as a Nazi prisoner of war. Until he regains his health, he is stationed at Gardner general hospital.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 May 27, page 15)

When Stalag 8A was liberated, it was believed that T/5 Charles Timm of Bangor was one of the prisoners freed there.¹⁰⁵ But when advancing Russian troops had gotten close to that camp, Timm was in a group of prisoners moved to another camp 40 miles north of Hanover, Germany. This camp had been liberated by “The Desert Rats” of the [British 7th Armoured Division](#) on April 16. Timm spent time in a hospital in England after having lost more than 60 pounds during his captivity.¹⁰⁶ In a letter to his wife written on April 26, he indicated that he was in a hospital but feeling fine despite having lost quite a bit of weight. He expected to be home for his birthday on May 18.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, he did not---it was July 3rd before he made it to the home of his wife’s parents in Bells Coulee.¹⁰⁸

Many POWs were moved as the Allies kept advancing into Germany in the ultimately futile attempt to extend their captivity. Shortly after April 1, Edward Wojahn’s group of prisoners were moved into the mountains of Czechoslovakia, where they remained until May 7. As American soldiers closed in, the POWs were moved out during the night. But Russian soldiers caught up with them on May 8 at [Brux](#) in Czechoslovakia. After staying in a British camp until May 17, the released prisoners were loaded on boxcars by the Russians and sent to another place in Czechoslovakia. The American [1st Infantry Division](#) took custody of them there and trucked the men to Pilsen. Then they were flown to Le Havre, France, and on to the United States.¹⁰⁹

It was also in the middle of May that Pvt. Gerry Besl was freed from his prison camp.¹¹⁰

By May 10, Corporal Albert Hundt of Middle Ridge was home for a 60-day furlough after being liberated from a German prison camp.¹¹¹ Two other local men who came home with him at the same time were Robert Bilskemper and Jack Davis.¹¹²



—Tribune Photo
A Liberated Prisoner Of War returned to La Crosse last week from Germany on a furlough, one of his first acts being to accompany his mother to a bank to invest in a \$50 war bond. S. Sgt. Robert H. Bilskemper looks on while his mother, Mrs. George F. Bilskemper, 919 Vine, receives the bond from George C. Freybler, Batavian National bank draft clerk.

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 13, page 1)

It was toward the end of May when Mr. and Mrs. George Gilles of Bangor received a cablegram from the Red Cross telling them that their son, James, had been liberated from his prison camp.¹¹³ His letter to them came days later. He wrote that he was “feeling fine” at a port city in France and hoped to be home by the middle of June.¹¹⁴

Edward Wojahn got back to the United States on June 12, 1945. After a few days of processing at Camp Kilmer, he was granted 60 days of leave at home. That was followed by a stay in a hospital at Fort Sam Houston in Texas. Then he was transported to a base in California where “all we did was eat and sleep or go to town to see a movie.” For diversions, he spent a couple of nights working in a ketchup factory and also volunteered to help cook on troop trains headed to Camp McCoy so he could spend a little more time at home. Wojahn was discharged on November 27, 1945.¹¹⁵

Pfc. Luther Freng wrote a letter to his parents on June 1 after being liberated from Stalag 4B. He said that he was “all right but weak.” Freng had not received any mail from home in the past five months.¹¹⁶



—Tribune Photo
Seven Liberated Prisoners arrived in the city last week on 60-day furloughs. All had been interned in Germany. They are top row, left to right, Pvt. Edward Wojahn, Sgt. Robert M. Pomeroy and Pfc. Lorenz A. Pinaki. Bottom row, left to right, T4 Robert Mulkey, Pvt. Willard DeBoer, Pvt. Gerry Beal and S. Sgt. Alfred D. Harnish.

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 24, page 7)

As a writer for the Bangor newspaper at the time put it: “Our boys don’t come back like they left us, but that does not matter if we only have them home again.”¹¹⁷

Just like other men who returned from the war, the former prisoners of war were anxious to put their experiences behind them and look to the future.

S.Sgt. Jack Davis married Ruth Erickson on July 18, 1945, at the Presbyterian Church in Bangor.¹¹⁸ Erickson was a graduate of the high school in Decorah, Iowa, and she had worked in her sister's beauty shop in Bangor. Davis was on a 60-day furlough before going to Miami for reassignment.¹¹⁹ He was sent to [Fort McClellan, Alabama](#), and his bride lived in nearby Anniston.¹²⁰ Davis was discharged in late November 1945. He and his wife returned to Bangor before Davis re-enrolled at the University of Wisconsin.¹²¹



Ruth Mae Erickson and S. Sgt. Jack R. Bavis took marriage vows of the Presbyterian faith at Bangor July 18.

(La Crosse Tribune, 1945 July 26, page 10)

Following his 60-day furlough, Cpl. Albert Hundt was also sent to Miami for reassignment in late July.¹²²

One month later, 21-year-old Corp. James D. Gilles of Bangor, who had been with a field artillery unit in the 106th Division, was also at the reassignment center in Miami.¹²³ He received his discharge from the

Army on November 22 at Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania.¹²⁴ When he returned to Bangor, Gilles played basketball for the Bangor city team.¹²⁵

Because no mail had been delivered to Charles Timm while he was a prisoner of war, he did not learn that he had a baby daughter until calling his wife on July 1 from Fort Sheridan, Illinois. Two days later, Timm met Charlotte Valeria Timm for the first time while on his 60-day furlough before reporting to Miami for reassignment.¹²⁶



Charles, Charlotte, and Phyllis (McClintock) Timm

(Bangor Independent, 1945 August 9, page 1)

S.Sgt. Howard Jones was discharged at Camp McCoy near the end of November 1945.¹²⁷

As these men lived out their lives, their experiences as prisoners of war affected them in sometimes subtle ways. In the Wojahn household, they were always well-supplied with the small comforts that most of us take for granted, such as toilet paper and facial tissues. Edward Wojahn, who had grown up during the Great Depression and survived a German POW camp, had known what it was like to go without things.¹²⁸

The mental effects were less tangible. One of Edward Wojahn's co-workers once told Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry, "The war really affected your dad." She thinks her father suffered from some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It was not recognized at that time, and there was no help for it. He was part of a generation that did not ask for help either, so it was a private struggle.¹²⁹ Even if the condition had

been recognized, the Veterans Administration was overwhelmed with so many physically injured and disabled veterans that they would not have had the resources to deal with mental issues, even if they had known about them.

Just eleven years after being captured during the Battle of the Bulge, Harry Atkinson died at his home, 532 N. 6th Street in La Crosse, at the age of 38. He was survived by his father, a sister, and two brothers. Harry Atkinson was buried in the Oak Grove Cemetery.¹³⁰

Otto E. Hayes lived near Coon Valley and worked as a maintenance man at Villa St. Joseph. The man who had survived World War II combat and a German POW camp had his life extinguished by a careless accident in 1972. His body was discovered in a garage at Villa St. Joseph on the afternoon of February 4th. The upper part of his body was lying on the front seat of a running car and the lower part of his body was outside the car. Because Hayes had replaced a battery in that car the day before, it was speculated that he was doing more work on it. Otto Hayes was 47 years old when he died of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning.¹³¹

Charles Timm, whose daughter was born while he was in a POW camp, became the postmaster at Mindoro. He died in the summer of 1975 of a heart attack while managing the Mindoro softball team during a tournament on their home field. He was only 52 years old.¹³²

In 1947, Robert Jahimiak married Evelyn Mull; they had no children. He worked at the G. Heileman Brewing Co. for many years. Jahimiak was 73 years old when he died at the Franciscan Skemp Medical Center on July 5, 1997. His cremains were interred at the St. Francis of Assisi Mausoleum in the Catholic Cemetery.¹³³



Jahimiak

(La Crosse Tribune, 1997 July 7, page B-3)

Edward Wojahn never talked about his prisoner-of-war experience; he may have told his brothers some details, but they never shared them with anyone. When his wife died in 1997, Wojahn's grandchildren pleaded with him to tell them about it. Wojahn recorded his memories on a tape recorder, and his granddaughter transcribed it. He also spoke to students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and local schools later in his life, but he probably glossed over some of the more unpleasant details.¹³⁴

Albert Hundt never talked about his time as a prisoner-of-war either, but he cried every time he saw his mother peel potatoes. In the POW camp, the German guards feasted on the potatoes while the prisoners nibbled on the potato peelings.¹³⁵ Watery potato soup had been a staple of their prison camp diet.

Hundt worked at the brewery in La Crosse and at the Crane Company in La Crosse for many years. He was 80 years old when he died on February 16, 1998, at the Bethany St. Joseph Care Center. Hundt's remains are entombed in the St. Francis of Assisi Mausoleum in the Catholic Cemetery in La Crosse.¹³⁶

Luther Freng, who was a medic in the 106th, returned to La Crosse where he worked as a welder at Trane Company for 35 years. He died at the age of 77 in 2000.¹³⁷

Edward Nagle, Jr., of La Crosse, who was a combat engineer in the 106th, worked for the city of La Crosse engineering department as a field engineer for 40 years before retiring in 1986.¹³⁸ He decorated veterans' graves with U.S. flags for Memorial Day for over 55 years.¹³⁹ Nagle was 81 years old when he died at his home on May 16, 2005. He was buried in the Mormon Coulee Memorial Park.¹⁴⁰



Nagle Jr.

(La Crosse Tribune, 2005 May 17, page B-3)

John R. Davis earned a degree in Agronomy from the University of Wisconsin in 1948, and he used his education to become a research specialist in hybrid seed corn. He died in 2005 at the age of 82.¹⁴¹

Robert H. Bilskemper, who was a platoon sergeant in the 106th Division, married Elizabeth Hall in 1946. They owned Bilskemper Landscape in Onalaska. He was active in his church, veterans' organizations, and served on the board of directors for Trempealeau Electric and Riverland Energy for a combined total of 21 years. The Germans could not kill Robert Bilskemper, but diabetes and heart disease finally did on March 20, 2009, at the Veteran's Memorial Hospital in Madison, when he was 84 years old. He was buried in the La Crescent, Minnesota, cemetery.¹⁴²

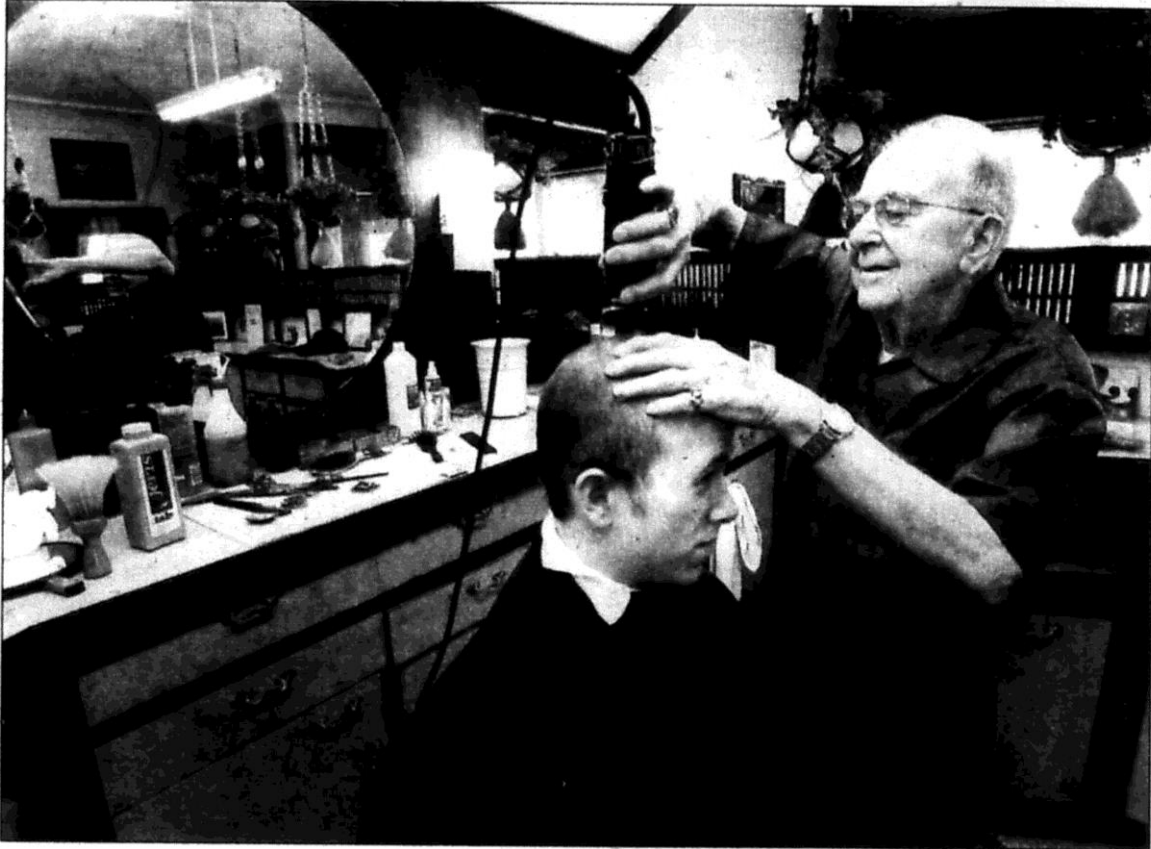


(La Crosse Tribune, 2009 March 23, page A9)

Gerry Besl got married and had five children. He served on the La Crosse County Board for 18 years starting in the 1960s. Besl retired as a full-time barber when he was 65 years old. After that, Besl continued to cut hair one day a week.¹⁴³ When Besl sold his barbershop at 1216 Hayes Street after 45 years of operation, he kept on cutting hair one day a week for the new owner.¹⁴⁴

When future United States representative Ron Kind was growing up on the North Side of La Crosse, Besl cut his hair for 14 years. Besl never mentioned his service in World War II. When Kind launched his [Veterans History Project](#) in Congress, Besl was one of the veterans he interviewed.¹⁴⁵

Gerry Besl finally fully retired in April 2008 after 59 years as a barber. His last four customers were his grandsons. The old barbershop at 1216 Hayes Street became a beauty shop.¹⁴⁶



ERIK DAILY/LA CROSSE TRIBUNE

Gerry Besl cuts grandson Sam Besl's hair Tuesday on his last day on the job. Besl hung up his clippers after cutting hair for 59 years.

(*La Crosse Tribune*, 2008 April 2, page B1)

Gerry Besl lived to be 91 years old. He died in his home on November 27, 2015, and he was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in La Crosse. Besl's death notice did not mention his service in World War II, just as he had not done during his life.¹⁴⁷

Henry Wittenberg settled in Onalaska. He worked as a brakeman for the Burlington Northern Railroad for 40 years before retiring in 1984. He died on December 12, 2016, and his remains were entombed in the Garden Mausoleum at Oak Grove Cemetery.¹⁴⁸



Henry Wittenberg

(La Crosse Tribune, 2016 December 14, page B-3)

Edward Wojahn was active in organizing reunions for the 106th Infantry Division survivors.¹⁴⁹ In May 1999, Wojahn and 32 other veterans of the 106th Division traveled to Germany to revisit the Ardennes battlefield. They met 32 German veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, and the two groups jointly participated at ceremonies at an American and a German cemetery.¹⁵⁰ After the war, Wojahn had been plagued by bad dreams and restless nights. He said he felt much better after his return trip to Europe and placing flowers on the graves of two men from his company. Wojahn felt a sense of closure, and he was able to talk about his experiences more freely.¹⁵¹

Wojahn had gotten married in 1948, had two daughters, and worked for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad for 44 years. Wojahn lived to be 96 years old, so he was the last, or one of the last, of the local 106th Division men to pass away. He died at the Hillview Health Care Center on August 2, 2019.¹⁵²



Edward Wojahn

(La Crosse Tribune, 2019 August 9)

One of his daughters, Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry remembers that her father never considered himself a hero. He simply said what he had been through was “the price of freedom.”¹⁵³

Some had paid that price with their own freedom for a short, but intensely difficult, period of their young lives.

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Jeff Rand
Adult Services Librarian
La Crosse Public Library

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¹² Marilyn Estes Quigley, *Hell Frozen Over: The Battle of the Bulge* (Bloomington, Indiana: Authorhouse, 2004), 127. Quigley’s book includes memories from several of the La Crosse County 106th Division men.

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- ⁷⁷ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 13.
- ⁷⁸ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 May 31.
- ⁷⁹ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 May 31. Davis brought the book back home with him. Davis hoped to visit the University of Wisconsin professor in Madison to show him the book that had come from a German POW camp.
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- ⁸⁵ "Sgt. Jones Liberated From German Camp," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 25, page 1.
- ⁸⁶ "Local Sailor Reported Dead; Soldier Is Released From German Camp," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 24, page 1.
- ⁸⁷ "American Prisoners In Bad Orb Camp Freed," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 April 5, page 1.
- ⁸⁸ "Jack Davis Freed From Prison Camp In Germany," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 May 3, page 1.
- ⁸⁹ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 May 31.
- ⁹⁰ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 May 31.
- ⁹¹ "2 Local Men Reported Dead; Another Is Liberated From German Prison," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 April 28, page 1.
- ⁹² "3 Local Men Are Liberated," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 1, page 1.
- ⁹³ "City Soldier, Liberated, Now On Way Home," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 July 3, page 5.
- ⁹⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 24.
- ⁹⁵ "Liberate Four City Soldiers," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 22, page 1.
- ⁹⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 24.
- ⁹⁷ "Letters Tell Of Liberations," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 23, page 10. In his letter, Harnish mentions seeing Sgt. Russell Wolden and Lt. Loren Crandell from La Crosse, who had also been prisoners of war.
- ⁹⁸ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 23.
- ⁹⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 24.
- ¹⁰⁰ "Many Vets Return To U.S. Scores Are Given Discharges," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 October 13, page 4.
- ¹⁰¹ "3 Local Men Are Liberated," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 1, page 1.
- ¹⁰² *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 1.
- ¹⁰³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2016 December 14.
- ¹⁰⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 27.
- ¹⁰⁵ "Charles Timm Is Liberated," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 7, page 1.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 August 9.
- ¹⁰⁷ "With Our Boys In the Service," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 May 10, page 1.

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- ¹⁰⁸ "Mindoro," *The Nonpareil Journal*, West Salem, Wisconsin, 1945 July 5, page 8.
- ¹⁰⁹ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 June 24.
- ¹¹⁰ "4 Local Men Reported Free," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 May 19, page 1.
- ¹¹¹ "Two Local Boys Freed From Nazi Prison Camps," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 May 10, page 1.
The other person mentioned in this article is Charles Timm of Bangor.
- ¹¹² *La Crosse Tribune*, 1945 May 13.
- ¹¹³ "James Gilles Freed From Prison Camp," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 May 24, page 1.
- ¹¹⁴ "Freed From Prison Camp, Hopes To Be Home Soon," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 May 31, page 1.
- ¹¹⁵ Wojahn, 11-12.
- ¹¹⁶ "106th Division Soldier Freed," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 June 5, page 10.
- ¹¹⁷ "We are happy with Mrs. Mary Davis," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 May 24, page 2.
- ¹¹⁸ "Heard About Town," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 July 12, page 3.
- ¹¹⁹ "Erickson-Davis," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 July 19, page 1.
- ¹²⁰ "With Our Boys In The Service," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 August 16, page 1.
- ¹²¹ "With Our Boys In The Service," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 November 29, page 1.
- ¹²² "Cpl. Albert Hundt," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 July 26, page 1.
- ¹²³ "Corp. James Gilles Now At Miami Beach," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 August 28, page 5.
- ¹²⁴ "With Our Boys In The Service," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 December 6, page 1.
- ¹²⁵ "City Team Wins First Game Of Year Here," *Bangor Independent*, Bangor, Wisconsin, 1945 December 13, page 1.
- ¹²⁶ *Bangor Independent*, 1945 August 9.
- ¹²⁷ "Many La Crosse Area Troops Receive Discharges At McCoy," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1945 November 28, page 2.
- ¹²⁸ Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry.
- ¹²⁹ Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry. Bob Lennox said this to her at Edward Wojahn's funeral.
- ¹³⁰ "Harry D. Atkinson," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1955 December 24, page 10.
- ¹³¹ "Death Ruled Accidental," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1972 February 6, page 2.
- ¹³² "Charles V. Timm," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, July 14, 1975, page 7.
- ¹³³ "Robert S. 'Bob' Jahimiak," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1997 July 7, page B-3.
- ¹³⁴ Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry.
- ¹³⁵ Ann Clements, conversation with the author, 2020 February 20. Clements, a resident of Middle Ridge, is a niece of Albert Hundt.
- ¹³⁶ *La Crosse Tribune*, 1998 February 17.
- ¹³⁷ Luther Freng," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, August 27, 2000, page C-7.
- ¹³⁸ "Edward J. Nagle Jr.," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2005 May 17, page B-3.
- ¹³⁹ Autumn Grooms, "WWII draftee saw the world," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, May 12, 2004, page B1.
- ¹⁴⁰ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2005 May 17.
- ¹⁴¹ "John R. 'Jack' Davis," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, April 22, 2005, page D-4.
- ¹⁴² "Robert H. Bilskemper," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2009 March 23, page A9.
- ¹⁴³ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2014 May 14.
- ¹⁴⁴ Pat Moore, "Barber ready to cut out after 48 years of work," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 1996 August 21, page A8.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ron Kind, "Passing of another 'silent hero,'" *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2015 December 13, page A4.
- ¹⁴⁶ Chris Hubbuch, "The Final Cut," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2008 April 2, page B1.
- ¹⁴⁷ "Gerald (Gerry) J. Besl," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2015 December 1, page A-7.
- ¹⁴⁸ *La Crosse Tribune*, 2016 December 14.
- ¹⁴⁹ Burt, *La Crosse Tribune*, April 5, 1993. The 106th Division Association website has a wealth of information: <http://106thindivassn.org/index.html>.
- ¹⁵⁰ Wojahn, 12.

¹⁵¹ Quigley, 240.

¹⁵² "Edward Carl Wojahn," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, 2019 August 9,
<https://obituaries.lacrossetribune.com/obituary/edward-wojahn-1076454099>

¹⁵³ Kathy (Wojahn) McHenry.