

JAMES PRIEST

PITTSBURGH

Born Stubenville (?) Ohio 8/16/20. His background is Catholic. Has only one sister. Graduate of highschool - was 19 when the war began on September 1, 1939 - when the Germans invaded Poland.

During the Depression - bootleg whiskey - drafter August, 1942.

Was at Fort Benning, Georgia in Infantry School. Was part of school troops - had extensive training and went to Europe, Scotland - landed in July of 1944. Was in England, Wales in preparation for D Day - went to France in 1934. Field Artillery Battalion - Medical detachment. When he landed there were still German planes coming over. Was not really informed about the enemy. Had no idea of the nature of the Nazis. His Captain was Jewish. He was attached to 1st Army - 104th Infantry division - went to town after town. In April, 1945 he was at Nordhausen - they had some casualties. At no time was he given an idea of what he might be facing in the camps - no one discussed with him anything about the Jewish problems in the concentration camps. He was at Nordhausen (Russian slave labor camp) April 13, 1945. The barracks was deplorable. Couldn't breathe - they weren't equipped to handle them. There were five or six guards still in the camp and the living conditions were terrible. They gathered up food and treated wjp tjeu cp1;d/ They were not really prepared, but they did what they could. His eyes were infected because of the gasses in the air from the bad living conditions. This was common around POWs. He had no mask - rubber gloves. Bodies were stretched out in the wooden barracks - some dead, some alive. They also ran across mental hospitals in France with terrible conditions. In Nordhausen there were Polish, Jewish, and Italian.

The effect on his life - he has thought about it alot.

He came back to the states in December, 1945 - a major demobilization period. His experiences have not affected his political positions.

He has worked in steel for 35 years.
Has never been back to Europe. Would like to go back.
His company had a reunion in 1947 - none since.

Most of the GIs had no prior information about the camps - genocide or what they would find.