

EDMUND MOTZKO

Born in Barabean, MN of Austrian family lineage. Entered MN National Guard in 1940 and was stationed in San Francisco when war declared. Stayed there guarding the west coast until transferred to Europe in 9/44. With 9th Army, 102nd Division, 544th Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion. Moved across France and Belgium to the Siegfried Line in 12/44. Crossed the Rhine and helped liberate a slave labor camp. A local resident claimed to be from St. Louis and asked that the prisoners not be released for fear of being killed by them. Motzko said "tough!" Once across Ruhr River, they began finding SS troops disguised as regular soldiers. Unit came to Gardelegen near Bismarck, Germany and entered the camp 4/13/45. Saw 2 piles of bodies still smoldering. Learned that Germans had marched 2000 prisoners 600 miles from the Eastern front to Gardelegen, but only 1000 made it, the rest having died /killed. Prisoners, Jews< Poles and others herded into a shed and machine gunned and the building set on fire. Remaining prisoners machine gunned and killed with phosphorous grenades. Motzko recalls seeing starts on charred uniforms. Germans tried to bury bodies in a ditch nearby. Eight to ten prisoners somehow escaped and Motzko assigned to guard them in case Germans came back to eliminate them as witnesses to the burning. Local resident made to feed and clothe them. Leader was Bondo Gaza a Hungarian Jew as he spoke English. Motzko wrote a long letter to parents 4/19/45 to parents detailing above facts and added pictures (text in transcript).