

NEWTON WOLPERT: HIS EXPERIENCES AT A CONCENTRATION CAMP

1st Lt, 43rd TB, B Company, C/O

(Letter to his brother-in-law, dated 28 April 1945)

Dear Irv:

I don't know how to start this letter, but I had the most horrible experience about fifteen minutes ago. We have been waiting for the engineers to complete a bridge across the river so I took off in a jeep with a couple other officers. We went to a concentration camp about a mile from here that was freed by us yesterday.

The first thing I saw was a pile of about 47 bodies all piled up and half burned. Continuing down the main lane in the camp, strung out in a line, were at least two hundred others, all stripped of clothes, and each one almost a skeleton. The bodies were not decomposed at all so couldn't have been laying there too long. You could see backbones where you should have seen stomachs. Their arms and legs were the size of children's. It looked like they had been starved to death and then shot.

The "living" quarters consisted of a large dugout with a roof. No sanitation. Every German farm I have been has better quarters for its pigs than these were.

To top it off, not 600 yards from the camp was a beautiful farmhouse which we didn't fire at because it had a large white flag flying when we approached. Of course the people claimed they were unaware of what went on. Also, I have yet to meet my first Nazi and I have really been through Germany.

It's too bad I don't have time to take my whole company up there and let the men see it for themselves. I know I never believed it could be so horrible until I saw it myself. It almost bothers me to think of the thousands of prisoners my company has taken and how well they are treated. No wonder the Germans laugh at us. Enough of the above. I'll never be able to forget it.

You may have read about our division crossing the Danube. My company and an infantry company reached the river first. They blew our bridge when I was about 200 yards from it. The task force on our left got to the river an hour later and was lucky and captured a bridge. My company and the infantry company went through them and enlarged and held a bridgehead until we got more troops over. We are some distance from there now and can even see the Alps in the distance.

I don't seem to be able to write much more at the moment for what I have just seen. Pass this letter around to the family. I can't write about it anymore.

Please write soon and give my best to everyone.

Newt.