

FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR

MERCER MEMORIAL DAY 500 ~ 724 662 2786

ALL 6 MEN WILL BE ON VETERANS PLATFORM, CITIZENS CEMETERY, SOUTH PITT STREET, NOON MONDAY, MAY 26, TO REMIND US OF THE PRICE OF FREEDOM. THEIR BIOGRAPHIES MAY BE PRINTED OFF OUR WEBSITE.

www.mercermemorialday500.homestead.com



ABIE ABRAHAM enlisted in the US Army at age 19 and served during WWII with the 18th, 14th, 15th and 30th Infantry., He was a light-weight boxing champ with the 31st Infantry in Manila, Philippines, where he served for 9 years. He fought, was captured, and was forced to participate in the 60 mile long Bataan Death March. Imprisoned for 3 ½ years he was bravely rescued by the 6th Rangers. Promoted to Master Sergeant he stayed behind at the request of General MacArthur for two and a half more years identifying and helping disinter the bodies of his brave fallen comrades along the death march trail and in the prison camps, and seeing that they were properly laid to rest. He has written two books, "Oh God, Where Are You?" and "Ghost of Bataan Speaks" which can be purchased from Amazon.com



WAYNE MCCLELLAND joined the Army Air Corp in the early stages of WWII. As a young bomber pilot he was shot down and held at Stalag 3 as a POW near the Polish border for a year before being released by General Patton's troops. He remembers always being hungry and credits the Red Cross for keeping him alive. When he was moved to a second camp near the Neuremberg Rail Station there was a very real fear of thousand pound bombs from aircraft killing him. "It was a war of nerves. The strain not knowing your fate was terrible," says McClelland. "We were often threatened by the Germans and once came close to being shot to death when accused of stealing food."



JIM ZIMMER was detained in 9-B Stalag after having been taken prisoner by the Germans. The wind blew through broken windows in the barracks. They were forced to stand out in the snow for hours and given only enough wood to heat their stove for one hour a day. 140 men were jammed into barracks 100' by 20' and a third had to sleep on the floor. Unlike Stalag 3, only one Red Cross shipment reached them. Jim ate out of a tin can or helmet and had to use his fingers. The meals consisted of putrid watery soup with German food cast-offs thrown in. Bread was made of flour and sawdust. At the beginning, one loaf for 6 men; later, one for 12. Malnutrition was a general condition and POWs slowly starved to death. "When American rescue came many were too weak from hunger to leave their bunks."



HAROLD "CURLY" BEERBOWER at 18 became a machine gunner in the US Army with D Company, 7th Infantry, and G Company, 20th Infantry. During the fighting he found himself in a foxhole with his buddies on each side of him dead and a bayonet at his own neck. His regiment was overrun at the Imjim River near Yongwon-ni, South Korea in 1951. He was marched 500 miles, with only 700 of the 1500 surviving the march, to the infamous Chinese Communist Prison Camp 1 near Chang Song, northern border of North Korea along the Yalu River near Manchuria. A 28 month captive, he proudly reports the Chinese called him one of the "Incorrigibles", one who would not co-operate with them. He was confined in a 6' x 6' area at times and forced to stand in temperatures 45 degrees below zero for hours. There was no medicine. "If you got sick it was up to you to get over it or die". 250 men shared rice with worms or soy beans with a small piece of ham added.



HAROLD ANDREWS was 17 in 1950 when he joined the US Army and headed for Korea as an infantryman with L Company, 17th Regiment, 7th Division. His regiment advanced into northern Korea behind enemy lines and couldn't get back out. He was captured at Chechon and was held for 31 months, the last camp being in Chang Song. He became ill and was taken to a hospital area. When he returned he discovered a fellow Pennsylvanian had moved in and, though he hadn't known him back home, had been raised just 15 miles away from Curly Beerbower. What a joy to discover someone from home! One place he stayed was called Bean Camp because they fed the prisoners twice a day...bean....and soup. Nearly 40% of all Korean prisoners of war died.



DAILEY HALSEY, a 20 year old U.S. Army squad leader in the 2nd Infantry "Indian Head" Division, hit all the hot spots of the Korean War, fighting from Pusan to the Yalu River until he was captured during one of the biggest battles at Kum-Ri. After 5 months of combat his squad and others were ordered to set up a defensive boundary on the mountain above Junu-Ri. They ran out of ammunition days earlier but marched on, hoping to reload once they reached the other side of the mountain. Dailey was 3rd in line as the group approached the mountaintop. Ahead of him was a Lt. Colonel and best friend Carl Hunt. In an instant both men were shot dead and lay crumpled at his feet. Five rifles were pointed at his head as thousands of Chinese Army troops closed in. 33 months in captivity he faced an everyday struggle for sanity and survival. Still suffering from the effects of frostbite he is proud of being considered by the enemy a "Reactionary", one who would not betray his country. His hearing loss came from being buried in a foxhole when a mortar struck nearby. 7,140 Americans became prisoners of war in Korea with the highest death rate for American Prisoners of War since the Revolutionary War.