

## Mitchell C. Long Prisoner of War



Mitchell C. Long (1925-1999) was born near Rosine, Ohio County, KY and died in Owensboro, KY. He was an Army veteran of World War II serving in Company C, 415<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, nicknamed "Timberwolf" from the division's insignia. The division was commanded by General Terry Allen (1888-1969). At the age of eighteen he was drafted on 18 June 1943 and reported to the draft board in Owensboro for induction on 29 June 1943. He went by bus with a group of draftees to Fort Benjamin Harrison, IN and there entered active service on 13 July 1943. He received training at Camp Callan, near San Diego, CA (Anti-Aircraft basic training, 17 weeks), Camp Granite, near Phoenix, AZ (Infantry basic training, 17 weeks, camp site was in the desert and consisted of only tents), Camp Carson, CO (additional Anti-Aircraft training, 6 to 8 weeks) and Fort Meade, MD (preparations for departure overseas, part of the trip here was by truck and part by train). At Fort Meade boarded ship and sailed for Europe on 27 August 1944. They were not told of their destination. They were at sea twelve days and landed in Normandy, France, on 8 September 1944.

His company was sent to the front line and they quickly advanced into Belgium by the end of the following month. On 25 October 1944 the 104<sup>th</sup> Division became part of the action on

the front lines. They participated in the Battle of the Bulge. On 16 December 1944 the Germans mounted a counter offensive against several points in the Allied lines. Hitler planned the offensive with the primary goal to recapture the important harbor of Antwerp in Belgium. The surprise attack caught the Allied forces completely off guard. United States forces bore the brunt of the attack and incurred the highest casualties for any operation during the war. The battle also severely depleted Germany's war-making resources. About 610,000 American forces were involved in the battle and 89,000 were casualties, including 19,000 killed. It was the largest and bloodiest battle fought by the United States in World War II.

A postal card dated 18 December 1944 from Prisoner of War Camp, Stalag XII-A, was received by Mrs. Anna Mae Long, Owensboro, KY. The name of her son, Mitchell Long, was entered on a standardized form letter stating that "I have been taken prisoner of War in Germany. I am in good health".

Kriegsgefangenenpost

20 Pf. - Postkarte

GERMANY

Stalag XII A

Mrs. Anna Mae Long  
Owensboro, Ky.  
Route #1  
U.S.A.

Communication  
\*\* Reviewed By \*\*  
P.O.W INFO. BUREAU  
Return Unnecessary.

Gebührenfrei

11339  
U.S. CENSOR

Empfangsort:  
town:  
Land:  
country:  
Landsteil:  
(Province and)  
country:

Prisoner of War Camp

Stalag XII A Date Dec. 18, 1944

(No. of Camp only as may be directed by the Commandant of the Camp.)

I have been taken prisoner of war in Germany. I am in good health — ~~as recommended~~ (cancel according to)

We will be transported from here to another Camp within the next few days. Please don't write until I give new address.

Kindest regards

Christian Name and Surname: Mitchell Long

Rank: PFC

Detachment: U.S. Army

(No further details. — Clear legible writing.)

Front and back of post card dated 18 December 1944

Page one of the 14 January 1945 edition of the "Owensboro Messenger" published the following picture and notice of Mitchell Long. The newspaper reported that "Pfc. Mitchell Long, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Long, Owensboro Route 1, has been missing in action in Germany since December 11, according to word received from the War Department. He entered the Army July 13, 1943, and has been overseas about four months. He is with the infantry."



**MISSING**—Pfc. Mitchell Long, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Long, Owensboro, Route 1, has been missing in action in Germany since December 11, according to word received from the War Department. He entered the Army July 13, 1943, and has been overseas about four months. He is with the infantry.

The report of his being missing in action was just days before the German's concentrated counterattack against the Allied lines. During the offensive thousands of Americans were surrounded and captured. He was with a group of about five men that during bad weather and heavy fog got lost from their outfit and walked the wrong way into the German lines and were captured. For some time after his capture they were kept in heavily guarded barracks in the German Army camp as insurance against bomb attacks. The POW camps were marked and were not to be bombed but one night a bomb was a direct hit on one of the barracks wiping out the whole group in that building. They were held at several camps sites. Sometimes they were marched for long miles and along the road dead German soldiers could be seen. During the bitter winter of 1944-45, the Germans force-marched thousands of POW's across the country in an attempt to keep them from the armies invading from the east and west. Part of the trip to Germany was by train, while on the train his feet were frozen.

Mitchell on 11 January 1945 addressed the following message to his parents of Owensboro, KY Route 1:

Jan. 11, 1945

Dear Mom & Dad,

Will write a few lines to let you know that I am still okay. I hope this letter finds you well. Tell Carroll & Emma hello for me. Tell them to write me every chance they get. And you write me to. I haven't got much room to write as you can see. Mom if you want to send me some candy & cigarettes you can see the Red Cross on how to send it. Tell Dad to write me when he get a chance. Mom, I will close for this time. Answer soon.

Your Loving Son,  
Mitchell

The message was sent from German POW camp, Stalag III-A, at Luckenwalde, Germany, 32 miles south of Berlin.



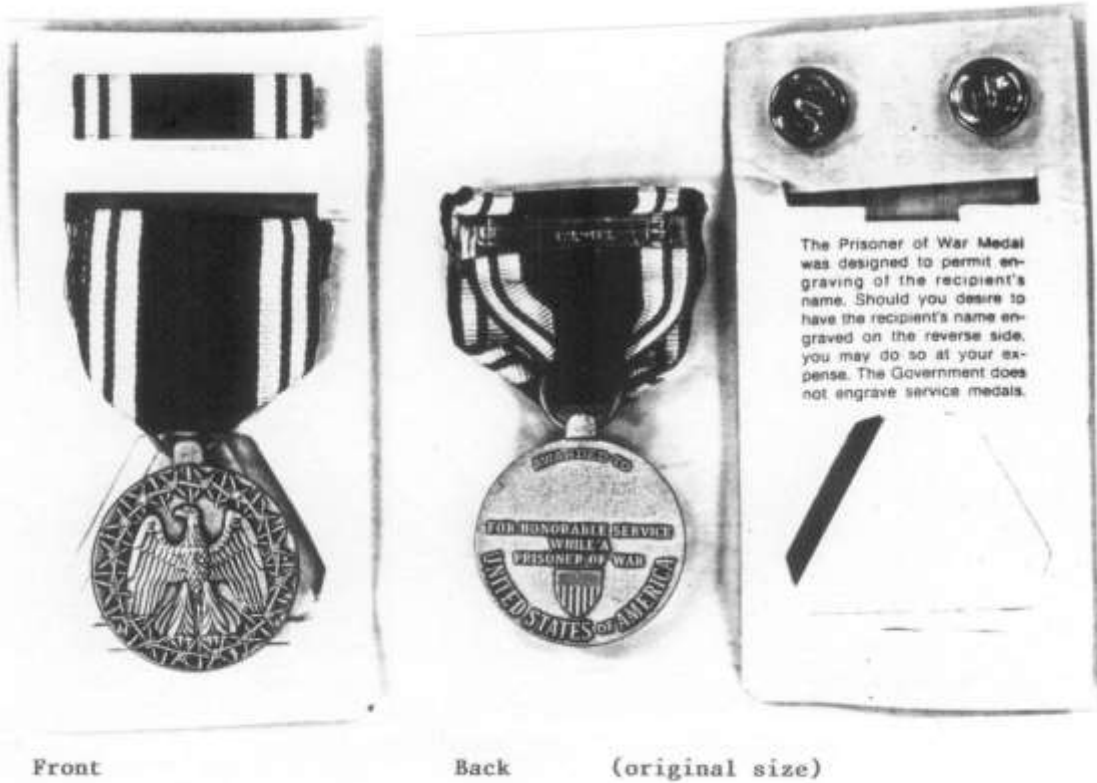
**Stalag III-A, Luckenwalde, Germany**

Two hundred thousand prisoners of war passed through the gates of Stalag III-A during World War II. As of 1 January 1945, the camp housed 45,942 POWs, including 24,996 French, 12,517 Soviet, 4,093 Serbian, 1,499 American, 1,433 British, 1,310 Italian, 86 Polish and 8 Romanian. Approximately 5,000 died there from disease, starvation, cold, brutality and neglect. Crowded four hundred men to a tent, the day to day routine was an exercise in misery, hunger, cold, and lice. A chief preoccupation involved tediously removing individual lice from one's garments. Showers were a rarity and only two outdoor faucets provided fresh water for the prisoners. Survival for American prisoners was largely contingent on the erratic receipt of Red Cross parcels from relatives and groups back home. The barracks were usually guarded by one English speaking German. The barracks had no heat. They had one meal a day, usually potato

soup, or turnips, or other scraps not used by the German Army, which at that point was not eating too well themselves. Many of the prisoners were sent out to do forced labor at various work sites in the region.

The camp was liberated on 22 April 1945 and Germany surrendered on 7 May 1945. The guards fled the camp as the Russian Army approached. At the time of liberation he weighed less than 100 pounds. Upon entering the service he had weighed 135. He was taken to France to be processed for the return home. From there went by plane to London, where they stayed a couple of days. On 29 April 1945 he sailed for America and arrived back at Fort Meade, MD on 13 May 1945. After being processed there he was transferred to Camp Breckinridge, Morganfield, KY. He spent the last six months of his active service there, while there he went on a vacation trip to Florida. On 27 July 1945 he was promoted to the rank of corporal and was discharged from the Army 29 November 1945. He was granted a partial disability pension on 2 January 1947 due to the condition of his feet that had been frozen during his service.

At a ceremony at Fort Knox, KY on 16 September 1988 Mitchell Long was awarded the US Prisoner of War medal.



US Prisoner of War Medal

By Jerry Long