

# ARTHUR J BOTZ



Arthur J Botz (37018540) enlisted in the US Army on 21 January 1941. He was sent to Fort Ord California for training and continued training throughout the United States. His first impression of the Army was that he hated it. He was ready to be discharged when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. At that point Art became a soldier for the duration of the war. He continued training around the United States including some time spent in Indianapolis Indiana. Botz was serving in the Medical Corps but was getting frustrated by others in the unit. He was asked to help train another soldier on a job that he was doing. The job would mean a promotion to Sergeant. After Art helped train the man, Art got the boot and stayed a private while the man he helped train was promoted. He decided that he wanted to transfer. He told them that he wanted to go into the Air Corps. They told him "No, you can go down but not up". His only choices to transfer to were Infantry or Graves Registration. He chose the Infantry. In 1943 he was assigned to the 106th Infantry Division, the "Golden Lion Division". The unit served as a training and replacement division. Art continued to train all over the country. On 27 October 1944 the entire division was sent overseas for service in the war. Art and the rest of the division sailed on the Queen Mary. The ship held over 22,000 men on the ride over. The division landed in England and trained some more. They then moved on to France, for a few more days of training before being put into combat on 10 December 1944.



**106th Division Patch - Donated by Art  
20 January 2007.**

On 11 December 1944, they were a part of the line in Belgium along a quiet sector. Five days later all hell broke loose. Arthur was a member of the Anti Tank Company of the 423rd Infantry Regiment. On 16 December the Germans let loose with a full scale attack, known as the Battle of the Bulge. The division had been in the combat zone for five days. The 106th took on a full force of the German offensive. The divisions entire front was 27 miles, much larger than most other fronts. The enemy turned it's guns on the 422nd and 423rd Infantry regiments and followed up with Infantry and Tank support. Art and the rest of his regiment held on until the 19th, when they ran out of ammunition. The commanding Colonel for the regiment drove in a jeep through the line under a white flag. Art and nearly 7,000 men of the 423rd and 422nd were taken prisoner. Art said, "I couldn't believe it". The men were split up and sent all over Germany into POW camps. During the assault Art took a couple of pieces of shrapnel and was wounded. For the wounds however, he was not awarded the Purple Heart. As a prisoner the proper record was not made and there is no documented evidence of the wound. He said, "It doesn't really mean that much to me, so I don't care"

Over five days Art traveled 85 miles. He spent 4 1/2 of the days traveling by train. The train had no heat, no bathrooms, and not enough room to sit. He was sent to a POW camp about 30 miles from Frankfort Germany. He recalled that when the US planes bombed Frankfort, they were still close enough to feel the windows rattle as the bombs went off nearly 30 miles away. When Art was searched a pistol was held about three inches from him while the Germans went through all of his pockets and looked for anything they wanted. Any money that the soldiers had was taken, unless it was French money. The Germans thought that the French money was worthless and they had no use in it. They had already lost control of France anyway. He was interrogated by a German officer that spoke remarkably good english. The officer said "you don't have to answer the questions, and probably won't, but I have to ask." Art asked how the man learned to speak english so well and the officer replied that he had lived in Ohio for most of his life. Before the war he went to Germany, the home of his ancestors for a visit. He was not allowed to return home and forced to join the German Army.



The camp held both US and Russian soldiers. Before they arrived the Russian were forced to build a fence through the middle of the camp to separate the Russian from the US soldiers. The fence was made of large wire mesh and didn't stop the men for talking with the soldiers from the Russian side. The men would spend a lot of time trading and selling items to the Russians. A thick piece of bread, or cigarettes could bring a high price from the Russians. As a whole though Art felt that the Russians were probably treated better than the Americans were. Arthur said that the food that they received was not very good and not very much. Over all though he felt that they were treated pretty well. In April 1945, Art was released from the POW Camp. He spent around 4 months as a POW and lost 40 pounds. He was 160 pounds before and was released at 120 pounds.

After release Art was sent home to the United States. He was on a 60 day furlough and planned to return to his unit. The unit trained for deployment to the pacific theater. The planned assault on the Japanese homeland was expected to lose over 1 million men in casualties.

Before Arthur and the 106th could be deployed to the Pacific, the Japanese surrendered. Now Art had to wait for his time to be discharged. At first the Army worked on a point system for discharge. The men had to reach a certain number of points before they could be discharged, and Art didn't have enough yet. They were awarded for months in and for months overseas. He had served almost 5 years in the Army but only about 6 months overseas. The stateside points were less than those he would have received if overseas longer. Eventually the Army lowered the number of points needed to gain discharge and Arthur was able to receive his.

Arthur J Botz was discharged as a Private First Class on 18 October 1945. He was awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Good Conduct Medal, American Defense Medal, and European Theater medals with three battle stars. He was also authorized the American Defense Service Medal and the World War II Victory medal. 50 years after his discharge from the Army he was awarded the Bronze Star medal for his actions in the battle. He also received the Prisoner of War Service Medal. The POW medal wasn't created until 1985, otherwise he would have received it earlier.



**Arthur Botz' dress uniform, issued to him after his release from the POW camp. Donated by himself 20 January 2007.**

Although a "green" division, the 106th Division is officially credited with going down fighting.