

## Local war hero dies; he saved 14 from firing squad

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By a Daily Record Staff Writer

They say that when facing death, your whole life flashes before you.

In the case of T/Sgt. Henry Emig, it must have been the sound of spoken German that triggered one part of his childhood memory. That recollection saved 14 soldiers' lives, including his own three days after D-Day in Normandy in World War II.

The strapping young Infantry sergeant has been taken prisoner by the Nazis, stripped and lined up to be shot with other survivors of the badly shot up unit.

Five of the 19 soldiers had already been machine-gunned down when Pennsylvania German, the homey dialect of his childhood back in the Spring Grove area, came to his rescue.

"Wait a minute!" he called out to the Germans. "We don't shoot prisoners."

Only it came out something like, "Haldemoll die gesheoze mir sheeze nein Kriegspefangenen."

It was not textbook German, but close enough. The Americans were spared and went to prison camp.

"Hen" Emig survived and today, 42 years later, will be buried with military honors in Susquehanna Memorial Gardens. He lived at 2405 Ramblewood Road (Shiloh) and died Wednesday at age 67 at York Hospital after a heart attack.

"He was missing in action for a long time. When he came out, he looked like a corpse," a brother, Harvey Emig of Spring Grove, remembered.

Emig weighed 168 pounds when he went into the Army and 87 when he went free, the brother said.

Photo published by the York Daily Record.



### POW picture

Spring Grove-area native Henry Emig is shown in a mug shot he recovered from a Nazi POW camp at the close of World War II.

Getting out of the prison camp at Christine, near the Polish border, was courtesy of the Russians. When they attacked on President Roosevelt's birthday, Jan 31, 1945, the Germans let up their guard and most of the men escaped.

Unfortunately, the Russians mistook the Americans for Germans and about 100 of them were shot as the men rushed forward, Emig remembered. The survivors were herded back into the camp, where they ransacked the German quarters for food.

There Emig found a picture of himself, taken shortly after his arrival at the camp, and mail from home. The prisoners were allowed to wander free and Emig decided to try to make his way to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. He hiked, rode in trucks and hopped freight cars to get within sight of the city.

Told he couldn't enter because of the extreme food shortage, he turned back to Poland, where he eventually joined up with other liberated prisoners and was sent home.

Before the war, Henry Emig was a local baseball star, a pitcher who had been signed by the old St Louis Browns and had pitched an exhibition game for Fort Dix against the Phillies. He took a dose of shrapnel in his leg before he was taken prisoner (he picked out the fragments with a penknife) and his baseball days were over.

Emig earned the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart for his war time troubles. A son, Timothy Emig, 1515 Steeple Chase Drive, Dover, said his father often talked to his sons of his experiences.

"He would talk to me because I was in Vietnam and in combat. We would just sit and talk," said the son, an ex-Marine. The other son, Michael Emig, lives in Levittown.

Emig would often lapse into the Pennsylvania German dialect when speaking to his sons, and sometimes when he got together with friends at the Viking Club, Timothy Emig said.

"We grew up speaking Dutch. Our parents and grandparents they all spoke it," said Harvey Emig.

Born at Bair Station, he was the youngest of the nine children of Israel and Clara Emig. He worked more than 31 years as a guard at the former Naval Ordnance Plant and its successor, AMF York, retiring in 1979. "He talked a lot about the war. It was like he was reliving it," a neighbor said Friday.



Photos supplied by Scott Becker. Group photo on left are men from York New Salem who served in WWII. Photo to right is T/Sgt Henry Emig prior to being sent to Europe. Both photos taken, circa 1944.



First row: Rev. Glassmoyer, Barney Baublitz, Johnnie Senft, Henry Emig, Ray Leppo, Elmer Senft, Rev. Shanebrook  
Second row: Edgar Madison, Russell Hinkle, John Sheffer, Elwood Sheffer, Francis Reindollar  
Third row: Ray Goodling, Lavere Leppo, Frank (?) Madison, Emanuel Gunnet, John Lau  
Fourth row: Robert Wildasin, John Bare, Bill Madison, Herman Hoover, Glenn Shirey

