

## Vet recounts ordeal as POW in North Korea

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By Peter Becker

**Sgt. George Glycenfer, Korean War Army veteran, received a Purple Heart and was a Prisoner of War.**

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By Peter Becker  
Wayne Independent  
Mon Oct 06, 2008, 05:37 PM EDT

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HONESDALE -

"You never know what day's your last," said George Glycenfer, a Hawley senior citizen who has vivid memories of being prisoner of war during the Korean War. He received special mention at the Korean War Ceremony, Saturday in Central Park, Honesdale, where nearly 80 veterans were given medals of honor by state legislators.

He was one of 7,140 American service members taken prisoner. Glycenfer said he was just a young kid from Luzerne County. "You grow up quick," he said.

In the Army infantry, he said his job, with the others, was to "march and fight, fight and march, march and fight." He was injured in combat and received the Purple Heart. The Chinese overwhelmed his unit, and they were taken prisoner. They in turn handed them over to a North Korean prisoner of war camp.

This was a lucky thing, he observed, for the Chinese would have surely killed him otherwise.

They were in the camp for 18 months. They froze, they starved. There were bugs. Sickness was rampant. They were ill-treated by the guards; few if any, showing any compassion. Dogs would be treated better, he said. He said the North Koreans viewed them as invaders.

All they had to eat was rice, and not much of it. Given the job of carrying the cooked rice to feed the prisoners,

Glycener was so hungry, when the guard looked the other way, he grabbed a handful of rice and shoved it in his mouth. Glycener began to roll on the ground choking. The guard only laughed.

"No fat boys came out of there," he added.

Red Cross deliveries brought in good food, but the North Koreans would steal it. The prisoners didn't even know that it had arrived.

Every day prisoners would be dying. "A lot of my buddies are still lying over there," he reflected. Many POWs were taken to Russia, and are still missing to this day. The prisoners were given no medical care, and they were left on their own to take care of each other.

The prisoners did what they could to keep each other's spirits up, giving each other company and friendship. There were thoughts of escape, but he said there was no way to do it. "There was no way we could outrun a Jeep or a bullet," he stated.

Thoughts of home kept him alive. Thoughts of his family.

Those who survived were finally released when the armistice was signed in 1953. They were let out to go over the "Bridge of Freedom" to the South Korean side. "We thought the day would never come," he said.

He was a Master Sergeant when he was discharged.

When the conflict began, a lot of Americans didn't even know where Korea was. Back home, the vet found that a lot of the public still didn't seem to know they were even gone. People didn't really understand his story.

He was able to learn a trade through the GI Bill. He did carpentry work and police work. Eventually he married, and raised three children; now he has nine grandchildren. A proud member of the Hawley American Legion Post 311, he also attends VFW Post 531 in Honesdale.

It took years to get over the experience as a POW, he said, adding, he still hasn't really adjusted, 55 years later. Of the United States, he added, "There's no country like it."

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