1LT CHARLES L. JONES – 5/26/1913 – 9/10/1999

Early Years and Background

The following is a biography of the life of 1st Lt. (after discharge, promoted to Cpt.) Charles (Charlie) Jones, written by his son, Warren L. Jones, after re-reading his father's book *The Water and the Rock* which Charlie wrote in 1978 when he retired at age 65, as well as other biographical resources this author researched to compose this biography of his father. A large part of the book focused on his time of joining the Army National Guard in 1929 at age 16 (he told the Guard he was 18 but was still somehow sworn in) and thereafter his Unit's activation for a year's worth of training in 1941 and after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, being further activated to Full Army "active duty" status with even more training and a voyage across the North Atlantic Ocean to undergo more training in Scotland and Ireland, and then landing in Tunisia for the purpose of turning back General Rommel's German forces.

Charles Lloyd Jones was born and raised in Audubon in southwest Iowa on May 26, 1913. He graduated high school in 1931, having won awards for excellence in baseball, basketball, football and track & field.

While still in high school, Charlie joined the Iowa National Guard in 1929, thinking the extra $15 quarterly pay he'd make would help fill his pockets in those very lean Depression years. Upon graduation, he found a good job as a surveyor with the County Engineer's Office and also became the film projectionist at the local theater where the owner befriended him and taught him the movie business. Mowing the greens at the local golf course also afforded him free golfing privileges, which he dearly loved. Both of these jobs were forbearers of future employment in the town of Northwood, Iowa.

From Charlie's book: At some point during the Great Depression he and his father were hired to saw down a big tree stump by a farmer, who told Charlie: *"Sonny, the steady dripping of water will wear away the largest rock."* (Jones, p. 35). This saying stuck with Charlie the rest of his life as that old adage applied to his life in so many different ways, to keep plugging away at the biggest obstacles he would encounter along Life's Highway and he could overcome anything. Charlie summed up what the farmer told him thusly in his book:

> *"In the journey of life, the steady dripping of water never ceases. The hard rocks of bad times and depressions and fusions slowly change and wear away. The cliché about "Mighty oaks from little acorns grow" could apply to many lives and many things, but it doesn't happen in a day or a month. The cells of cause can multiply into effect only under the right conditions. And conditions can be sought."* (Jones, p. 39).

Charlie met our mother, Myrtle, in the late ‘30s while on a trip with a friend to Creston, Iowa, 90 miles away. He was immediately smitten with her and spent the next two years hitch-hiking to Creston to court her on weekends.

Military Service

Charlie joined the Army National Guard in 1929 while still in high school and could count on this for 15 bucks every three months with another 15 for the yearly two weeks' encampment. Charlie covered his entertainment costs by sweeping the local movie house and learning the projector's mysteries. This earned him free shows and an occasional dollar on the side.

With the advent of horrendous developments under Hitler’s regime, in December 1940 Charlie’s 34th "Red Bull" Division Army National Guard unit was activated for what was to be a year of training, first at Fort Benning, Georgia where he was promoted to a 2nd Lt. office status, then at the new Camp Claiborne in Louisiana. At the end of that year, the bombing at Pearl Harbor had taken place and Charlie’s unit was notified their year of training was to now be extended indefinitely on “active duty” status.

Charlie graduated communications officers’ school from Fort Benning, Georgia, in May, 1941. The two-day drive from Fort Benning, Georgia to Camp Claiborne, Louisiana soon found him with the problems of clothing, feeding, equipping, inspecting and encouraging the 200 men in his company.

> *“The first three months of Army life was school. Basic knowledge and skills in the Army's communication systems was both enlightening and interesting. Theory and practice and operation of telephones, switchboards, construction, radio networks, telegraph codes, cryptographic messages and various other mediums of communication were force-fed in class and field with an intensity and urgency that left little time for leisure."* (Jones, p. 60).

> "*Long, weary days and miserable, lampless, training nights; heat, sweat, simulation, mud, field rations that you'd throw out at home, and dust, dust, dust. Such were the conditions and experiences of the Red Bull Division through the late summer and early fall days of 1941."* (Jones, p. 63).

> *"Near the end of November, Charlie was granted a ten-day leave which he spent by returning to Audubon, Iowa, his hometown, to be with family and borrow his brother's car to drive 90 miles to Creston, Iowa, to visit his fiancé, Myrtle Polson. Upon boarding the train to return to Camp Claiborne, Pearl Harbor was bombed the day he returned to Camp Claiborne, to be greeted by his comrades, as the ensuing days were filled*

with confusion, pandemonium, conflicting orders and near chaos became almost at once the general state of both the affairs of the camp and the personal lives of its inhabitants. "What if" and "in case of" meetings and exercises dominated three-fourths of the waking hours as commanders tried to visualize and plan for almost every imaginable situation that could be concocted in the minds of almost panic-stricken men." (Jones, p. 65).

December 1941 Charlie received word from Myrtle that she was breaking off their engagement, the reasons therefore not necessary to be shared here. See the follow-up to that later in this bio.

"Following Pearl Harbor, the troops at Camp Claiborne were subjected to "alerts," sometimes twice a day, whereby the troops had to clear the camp, whereby all camp permanent equipment had to be stored, mattresses, bunks, tools, desks, whatever didn't belong on an infantryman's back or could be put in his barracks bag had to be moved to a collecting point and piled in the customary military lined-up orderlines. Company and personal issue equipment, weapons, grub and supplies were packed on trucks, and the company, with full field pack preparation, fell in, ready to move. Usually, within an hour of "hurry up and waiting" -- the one true specialty operation of all military -- an "All Clear" bugle would cancel the alert and the whole procedure of unpacking, unstoring and unpreparing was activated and camp life, training and meetings continued on in their usual way until the next alert, sure to follow within the next 24 hours, was sounded." (Jones, p. 66).

"January of 1942 Charlie and his Division was transferred to Fort Dix, New Jersey for follow-up and final preparation for the first great leap from practice soldiering into that unknown initial step of actually going to war. The next few weeks were spent in writing final letters home to loved ones, inoculations, vaccinations, boozing and, when it could be arranged, an overnight leave to negotiate New York City, where only a few from the Midwest division had ever been before." (Jones, p. 71).

Charlie's 34th "Red Bull" Division was the Army's first division to leave the country as the U.S. prepared to go to war. While on the 11-day crossing on the British ship Duchess of Atholl to Ireland for further training, Charlie was promoted to 1st Lieutenant, moving up after having been a year in his past rank of Second Lieutenant. It was during the crossing that Charlie had thoughts of his own mortality and hoped that his now-realized answer to the question of "What is your purpose in life?" was that his purpose was to give of himself and hopefully eventually marry and have a family of his own, perpetuating some of himself in the children he might have. Times were serious but Charlie had come to realize and know that his purpose in life was to give life.

"*To see that life continues is the prime purpose for being."* (Jones, p. 74).

After being promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant while still at sea, he was now the company supply officer, administrative officer, transportation officer with 30-plus vehicles in his charge, regimental chemical warfare officer and was responsible for the company's and officers' mess after landing in Belfast, Ireland.

Charlie's Officer Portrait Photo

It was the first week of March and Coleraine, Ireland, was to be the temporary home of Charlie's company for the next two months for continued training. After three months spent training in Coleraine, Charlie's regiment moved to the southern border of Ulster, near Eniskillen by late May. By mid-July Charlie's company and regiment at Eniskillen underwent long conditioning marches and training and the men became more lean, steps far livelier and morale mounted.

Charlie was given a break in training when he was assigned to a British chemical warfare school held across the Irish Sea at a former English resort area near Penrith.

Thereafter the regiment was moved from Eniskillen to Inverary, Scotland where training was accelerated and intensified. It was there that a landing exercise on the shores of Loch Fyne was practiced repeatedly. It was suspected they were soon to be sent for real to a landing or an invasion of somewhere, yet unknown precisely.

> *"Early in October their camp was deserted in a move near Liverpool where vehicles and equipment disappeared into the holds of ships waiting in its harbor. Ships set sail in October and were eventually joined by an even larger contingent of ships which expanded into a giant flotilla like none had ever seen before. Operation Torch was about to start and they soon landed on Beer White Beach near Fort Sidi Farouch near the City of Algiers. After three days the city was in Allied hands, the United States flag fluttered over Fort Sidi Farouch and an armistice*

was signed with the French government in Algiers on November 11th."
(Jones, pp 87, 89).

For the final months of 1942 limited training schedules were again put into practice, routine morning and evening formations were again in effect in the Algiers area. Two months later the 168th Infantry Regiment was ordered east into Tunisia to help pin down Rommel's forces.

Approximately around the 10th day of January in 1943 the regiment received orders to move up to the Tunisian front and in two days' journey from Algiers, the regiment was to attack the following morning and secure a railroad station at a place called Sened. German tanks soon appeared and Charlie's troops retreated for ten miles. No ground was lost and Sened was captured the following day. The battle for Sened was not easy and in three days it was taken and secured.

Soon thereafter orders were received to abandon Sened and convoy to a place called Sbeitla. Charlie was ordered to lead the 70-some truck convoy from the Sened battleground to Sbeitla some 60 to 70 miles away and his only map was a three-column square road map he had clipped from an Algiers newspaper some days before.

> *"Sbeitla was a key road junction through which movement would have to be made by any Army coming through Faid or McNassey mountain passes to the south. Charlie's regiment's mission was to seal off Faid Pass near an oasis settlement called Sidi bou Zid. (Jones, p. 96).*

While settled in at Faid Pass a three-day battle ensued between German forces and Allied troops. The Allies were hemmed in on three sides with nowhere to go. Ultimately an Allied plane flew over the command post, dropping a canned message telling the troops to destroy all remaining vehicles, carry only side arms and make a withdrawal under cover of darkness to a mountain called Garet Hadid some 25 miles back toward Sbeitla which was supposed to be still in Allied hands, only to find out ultimately that Garet Hadid would soon be surrounded by German troops. For three days the Allied troops were without food or water after they had reached Garet Hadid's base. Machine guns and mortars were set up by the Germans and one Allied plane flew overhead and quickly disappeared, giving the Allied troops a feeling of being abandoned by air power as the Allies were exhausted from their overnight march of 23 miles and were quickly overtaken and captured by the Germans. During the barrage of bullets coming from the Germans, Charlie had a sharply-sliced hole through one pant leg from a mortar shell, and a burst of gunfire tore off his shoulder strap and another passed close under his nose. Ultimately it was of no use to continue the fight and the Allied troops began to surrender and wave handkerchiefs attached to their rifle muzzles and waved it over their heads in surrender.

When Charlie surrendered his gun on February 17, 1943, he was commanded by a German soldier to hand over his wristwatch. The watch had been a gift from his fiancé

in 1941 and Charlie tried to reason with the German that it was personal, a gift from his fiancé, and not a military watch. Ultimately the watch was confiscated and the German actually wrote a receipt for same to Charlie. Charlie was officially now a Prisoner of War. Several thousand men and over 150 officers were now under the control of the Germans.

Capture

Within an hour of their capture, the Germans escorted the Allied troops back over some of the same territory they had traversed days before, ultimately to being trucked to Sousse for another night on the ground, a ration of bread and sardines and then on the following day to Tunis.

After several days of interrogation of the new prisoners by the Germans, they were boarded onto planes that took them across the Mediterranean and ultimately landed at an air strip in Naples, Italy, a short ride through the city and on a few miles further to Capua where 4,000 men were imprisoned behind a barbed wire area 75 yards square, the only place to rest being bare ground. A latrine was in place in the form of a cement slab with 22 holes formed in it that covered a trench at one end of the camp. This was their new home for the next two weeks.

While at Capua, this provided the opportunity to interview prisoners for the purpose of personal accountability to next-of-kin back at their homes.

While at Capua, the prisoners were issued Red Cross food parcels, meant to last a week. It was greatly appreciated to have these better food provisions than the meager less palatable food their captors were otherwise serving them, one meal a day.

Around the 12th day at Capua, dysentery spread quickly among the prisoners, making for a sloppy, foul mess in and around the 22 holes drilled into a cement slab that served as the latrine.

Finally, the enlisted men and officer prisoners were put on dilapidated railcars for shipment into Germany.

The train ride took the men through Italy northward, the Swiss Alps and ultimately to a prison camp in Moosburg, Germany, Stalag IIIB, and in a week's time all commissioned officers were separated from the enlisted men and moved by train to Rotenberg, named Oflag IX-AZ, where they joined up with around 200 (mostly older) British officers who had been there since the spring days of 1941 when they had been captured at the historic battle of Dunkirk, now already having been prisoners for two years. The British officers welcomed the new arrivals and helped the American officers become integrated with how the camp operated. Two semi-meals were served per day at noon and evening.

British and Canadian Red Cross food parcels augmented the diet and by late May the constant feeling of hunger settled down with the aid of Red Cross parcels that were designed to last a week.

This prison had been established long enough to have accumulated a library and reading became the main pursuit of nearly everyone. British home front suppliers and the YMCA were responsible for the accumulation of books on many topics.

Placing Americans in contact with the Britishers who had two years' experience in learning the ropes of survival and contraband and resistance was the Germans' tactical error in blending the American/British prisoners. The British prisoners were a great source of learning how to adapt to prison life.

Besides perfecting ways to help make possible and advancing any approved escape plan, other activities filled idle, empty hours.

Crude dramas were lifted from library books and acted out from the stage in the mess hall. Lectures were given by men from all walks of civilian life about their specialty. Singing recitals by anyone who had that talent and choral groups gave concerts from the limited sources of music books in the library.

Charlie attended many evening activities, one of which were a series of nightly lectures by a British chaplain on the history of philosophy. Charlie talked to the chaplain re the topics given and the chaplain shared with Charlie that when answers to philosophical subjects couldn't be absorbed, the chaplain turned to the poets to give life meaning. Charlie profited from turning to poetry to help him understand beauty, truth, and other worldly topics to help expand his mind and fill his time behind bars.

The British had acclimated to prison life over their two years as prisoners and they'd formed discussion groups, card games, knitting or embroidery. Charlie thought he would like to give a try at embroidery and wrote his (now resumed) fiancé, Myrtle, asking if she could send some materials to try his hand at embroidery. Four months later a parcel arrived with enough fabric, needle and thread to make a tablecloth that ultimately found its place on the holiday table of the family that he and his (later) wife would later create.

The first week of June, 1943 the Americans were moved from the Rotenberg camp to a camp assigned to American ground force officers only at the small town of Szubin, Poland, severing their connections with the Britishers, and arriving on June 6th at what would become Charlie's "home" called Oflag 64 for the next year and a half.

> *"The train ride across Germany to Poland was a 2.5-day journey. Several times stops were made alongside trains whose boxcars were overflowing with sunken-eyed hollow-cheeked civilians. It was assumed*

they were slave laborers on their way to some work destination in Germany, but not till the end of the war was it realized these were trains bearing desolate, hopeless Jews on their way to the extermination camps further east in the Reich or in Poland." (Jones, p. 118).

OFLAG 64

*"*Finally the prison train arrived at Szubin, a small Polish town some 50 kilometers northeast of Poznan, Poland on June 6, 1943, the destination camp named Oflag 64. The camp's main building was said to be a former riding academy; a two-story, very old stone building. The confinement area was approximately 150 yards square. Eight more long, low, single-story tile barracks had been recently built within the compound in anticipation of future occupants. All the officers in the group were housed in the main building, jammed into former small classrooms and larger study halls." (Jones, pp. 118-119).

Charlie's Oflag 64 ID card

Food was in no greater quantities or better quality than it had been at IX-AZ, but within a few weeks American Red Cross food parcels arrived. As before, the Red Cross parcels were designed to last a week. Fear of no more arriving was one of the greatest concerns.

With German concurrence, American senior officers set up areas of responsibility under which the camp was to function. Administration, recreation and education, training and supply sections were established under the Army system of S-1, 2, 3 and 4.

"Charlie drew the assignment of camp clerk in the administration section and spent at least half days for the first year in the various jobs concerning personnel, rosters, correspondence and other clerical chores which filtered down from the normal Army bureaucratic procedures into the less apt environment of a prison camp. He was furnished an ancient typewriter, of Swedish make and unstandardized keyboard, which he soon learned to master, and became an early link of the chain through which all information and official action entered or left the camp. Later on, he became active in the theater group, the chorus and played some baseball." (Jones, p. 120).

A library, a theater of sorts, lectures, recitals, plays, concerts and many types of school classes on almost any subject imaginable was soon to come about. The YMCA furnished great numbers of books for a library, which started arriving in the camp in October of 1943. By the end of the war this library contained somewhat over 2,000 volumes.

Musical instruments began arriving into the camp from the YMCA and by the end of the year it was possible to hear an occasional concert by an orchestra of 30 instruments. Concerts and plays and lecture classes were given, all time fillers, often informative, and helped keep the drabness of prison life from becoming an endless boredom.

Charlie (front row 3rd from left) in photo of the Oflag 64 Men's Chorus

Over time, authorization was given to turn one end of one of the unfilled tile barracks into a theater of sorts where plays, concerts and lectures were held. Charlie enjoyed being, a member of the 32-voice chorus, as he'd always enjoyed singing.

For Charlie, as for most all who were captured in mid-February in Africa, the first opportunity to wash clothing had come in late May at IX-AZ. From the time of leaving

Algiers in late January until late May he had not had his clothing off. Now in the warmer weather of the summer months it was easier to wash clothes, albeit in a primitive fashion. A clothing shipment from the Red Cross was received in the camp by early fall and it was an issue to provide a change of clothes for the total population of the camp at that time.

Softballs, gloves and bats were also received and ball games were played on the one spare open space in the camp large enough on which to play.

Receiving mail was of utmost importance, with the exception of the craving of food. Travel time varied from three weeks to three months between sender and receiver. Outgoing mail was limited to three single sheets in letters and four postcards per month. The first mail came into camp in September of 1943, which was a long lapse from the February time of their capture.

One food or clothing parcel and one book parcel of limited weight was allowed to be received from next of kin every three months. Parcels from home, like mail, were opened and inspected before being received.

While at this camp various escape plans were made, mainly by tunneling once the appropriate tools for digging were fashioned. One such tunnel was in progress over a year and a half, but ultimately these plans were scrapped when security was tightened at the camp.

Religion was an important facet of camp life. Church services were held weekly for both Catholic and Protestant believers by prisoner chaplains. The library was well stocked with religious books and Charlie estimated he had read some 250 books on religion and other subjects covering biographies, novels, texts, music, poetry and whatever filled time and broadened his mind. [This author remembers seeing a list of those books Charlie had read but could not find it when composing this biography.] Below is a photo of the Christmas postcard Charlie sent to Myrtle containing his poem and tribute to Myrtle, holding on to hope, his faith in God, and a hoped-for reunion with Myrtle when they would reunite upon his liberation.

Charlie's Christmas postcard with original poem to Myrtle, Nov. 14, 1943.

The customary observed Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts were accomplished by cutting back on the potato ration and then everyone pooling their Red Cross corned beef, having one large, belly-bulging bash.

Handel's "The Messiah" was sung by the chorus and hymns and carols were sung in the barracks. Thus, 1943 came to a close as winter intensified. By the spring of 1944 Charlie had finished the embroidery on the large tablecloth Myrtle had sent him. He also embroidered a colorful cloth of a house built into a hillside with trees around it, a cornucopia and the words "For these we give thanks" embroidered on it, which hung on the wall of his parents' home from the 1940s until it was given over to Charlie's son for safekeeping to honor the memory of Charlie in his son's home.

Charlie's embroidered tablecloth and the embroidery he sent to his parents in 1944 while a POW

"He could hardly believe he would be up to the challenge of cross stitching the large tablecloth which he received from her some four months later. There it was complete with thread and needles. But he quickly learned that one of the vital tools in embroidering was embroidery hoops. He also learned that German needles, which he could get from the canteen, were superior to American needles. He cut the top out of a powdered milk tin can lid with his pocket knife and fitted it over the detached rim of the can and found this to make an ideal set of embroidery hoops. He spent hundreds of quiet hours on his task over the next several months and was rewarded with the satisfaction of creating his own contribution to beauty". (Jones, p. 116).

"German radio speakers were placed in the barracks along with their newspapers. However, there were other sources which had made it possible to receive radio contacts with the BBC in London, and even

shortwave from the States, but extreme security had to be enforced when news time came. The news from both sides of the conflict was available daily and the prison camp was as well informed on current events as any who lived through that period." (Jones, p. 131).

"The first anniversary in Oflag 64 was the 6th day of June and plans were made for an anniversary celebration. Various activities were planned for that day, a track and field meet, volleyball and softball games, a play at the theater. The band would be allowed to play "appropriate" music at the ceremony. With luck on their side, the band played "The Star Spangled Banner," our forbidden national anthem. For the first time in 18 months that song was now being heard by the prisoners and tears were running down every cheek by the time it was concluded. It was the greatest coup in the camp thus far. Though the Germans knew in advance that June 6th was to be D Day for the Allied forces to come ashore the European continent, the prisoners also knew from their contraband radio that June 6th was also the planned D Day, all the more reason to celebrate that and the one-year anniversary of their arriving at the camp." (Jones, p. 133).

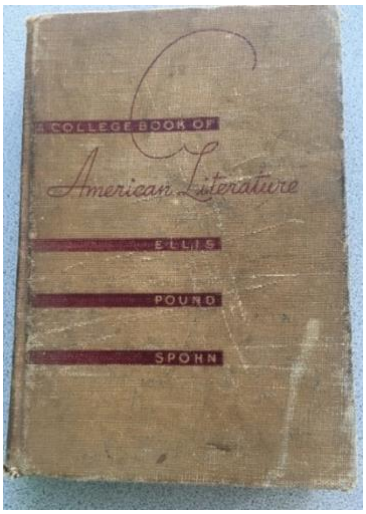
Sometime later that year a few captured ground force officers had been repatriated, due to wounds or illnesses which made them unfit for further combat and Charlie sent his embroidered tablecloth and a few other handicraft items home with one of them.

"Christmas was approaching and once more "The Messiah" was being prepared for a week's run in the limited-capacity theater. Caroling and serenades were allowed between barracks on Christmas Eve and again tears trickled down the cheeks of the prisoners while they sang "Silent Night, Holy Night." Since D Day, morale and hopes were now dashed in the awesome counter-offensive at The Bulge. Thus ended 1944." (Jones, pp. 136-137).

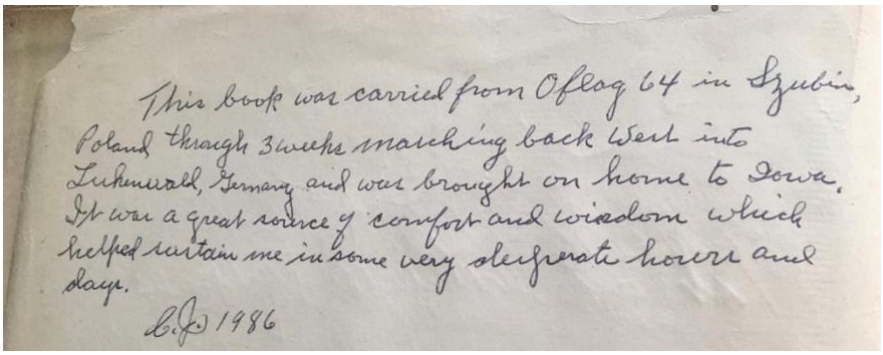
"Charlie had written as a last entry of 1944 in his tiny shirt pocket diary: 'As the year closed, I can look back and be thankful for many things. Health has stayed at a fair level. I haven't been too cold, have managed to keep from being too hungry, have had food from home and comparatively frequent assurances from home that my loved ones are well and still waiting for me and loving me. May God continue to bless Myrtle, Mom, Dad and family. And may I be worthy of continued blessings as much as in the past. With hope and prayer for the future, it's goodbye to 1944.'" (Jones, p. 139).

"Around the middle of January, 1945 there had been movement by the Russians across the Vistula River and Oflag 64 was right in the path of their advance. Soon orders were to prepare to move out toward the

west. Charlie packed up what he could in a home-fashioned knapsack to carry an extra pair of socks and a large <u>*College Book of American Literature.*</u> (Jones, p. 139).



Charlie's 980-page 2.5lb. book from the Oflag 64 library that he carried with him on The Long March; brought it home, too, now in possession of Charlie's son.



Charlie added this inscription in 1986 on the inside cover of the book he treasured.

The Long March

"On January 21st 1400 American officers were loaded down with whatever they could carry on their backs for "The Long March," with the intended purpose of evacuating the German camp to retreat west to Germany due to the Russian forces' imminent advancing to the camp's east, on sometimes snow-packed roads or sometimes sloshy muck when there was a temporary rise in temperature."

The temperature was well below freezing. Over the course of the next 16 days Charlie marched 222 kilometers. Charlie was too weak, and was suffering from a bad knee, to continue the march on the 17th day and, with 100 other sick and disabled officers, was put on a truck to be placed on a train, that day Charlie only having a ration of two spoons of meat. The next day February 6, he traded cigarettes for bread. February 7th he had one cup of pea soup. February 8, 9 and 10 he had nothing as he arrived via train

at Luckenwalde, Germany. From his diary entry of February 10 to March 7, he wrote *"Been getting gradually weaker on a diet of bread and pea soup and ersatz tea. Sleeping on a handful of wet straw on 8 bed boards. Too cold to take off any clothes so I've had mine on since January 20, save for one de-lousing. Skinny and weak as a cat."*

Freedom At Last

On April 21, 1945, Charlie and the camp at Luckenwalde was liberated by Russian tanks and armored cars, etc. However, due to technical red tape to be cut through for official handing over of the liberated POWs to the American forces, Charlie was not transferred to American troops until May 21, a full month of waiting for that day of total freedom once again to arrive.

Post-War Update

Charlie's army discharge record shows him as having been awarded the following decorations: a European-African-Middle Eastern Theatre Campaign Ribbon with 3 bronze Stars and Arrowhead; a Combat Infantry Badge ("CIB," as it's known) - a very prestigious award - and an American Defense Service Ribbon. Having served in the military from his days in the Army National Guard 34th Red Bull Division starting in 1929 to his days of activation to the Army's 168th Infantry Regular Army from 1941 to January 16, 1946, upon his formal discharge from the Army he was awarded the promotion from 1st Lt. to Captain.

Charlie was a Prisoner of War for 26 months, mostly confined to a POW officers' camp in Szubin, Poland named "Oflag 64" by the Germans. Food was of poor quality and scant variety and Charlie lost 60 pounds during this time. He depended greatly on Red Cross parcel food kits and donations of additional supplies by the YMCA and from home to help him exist, and of course receiving mail of love and news from "home" was something that sustained his spirit. Charlie read hundreds of books donated by the "Y" during his time as a POW and became educated on many diverse subjects. These months as a POW had a profound effect on how Charlie would live the rest of his life when he returned home. In hindsight, what he learned there defined who he was - a man with a deep spiritual faith, a deep thinker and a profound reverence for life and all of its blessings.

Earlier reference in this story was connected to a breakoff of Charlie and Myrtle's engagement and how Myrtle had become dis-enthused with Charlie and had returned his engagement ring while he was away in army training. But over the course of the ensuing years she never quit loving him, and likewise for Charlie, as he wrote and asked his father to invite Myrtle to the parental home for a visit and, while there, per Charlie's request, by proxy, Charlie's father on bended knee asked for Myrtle's hand in marriage on behalf of his son. She said yes, and the hopes and dreams were fulfilled to take their

vows of marriage on July 15, 1945, three weeks after Charlie had returned home to American soil. Myrtle waited all those years Charlie was away from 1941-45 and a romance between two continents that separated them for too long finally changed for them with the new titles of "husband" and "wife."

Five children were born to their marriage between 1947 and 1953. Charlie and Myrtle owned and operated a theatre in Elma, Iowa until 1954 and then moved the family to Northwood, Iowa where they purchased the Northwood Theatre. Until its closing in Spring 1960, the Northwood Theatre was a beehive of activity for young and old alike. A page-long article detailing those six years was printed in *The Northwood Anchor* newspaper in its April 16th edition. Due to the onset of competition in the form of color television, Charlie closed the theatre in 1960. To support his family he became Northwood City Clerk for a time, sports writer for "The Anchor" as well as groundskeeper for the Northwood Country Club. He then became an auditor for the Iowa Department of Revenue until retirement in 1978.

Charlie accompanying veterans in July 4, 1979 parade, one year after his book "The Water and the Rock" was published, detailing his growing-up years up through the end of the war.

Charlie quickly became well-known in our community not only because of his public position on Central Avenue as a theatre manager, but also for his willingness to give back to the community. What follows is a listing of some of the various activities he gave his time to:

- Chairman of the Northwood Park & Recreation Board for 19 years.
- Member of Northwood Zoning Commission for 10 years.
- Chairman of Viking Manor for 12 years.
- Member of Northwood Boy Scout Committee, Northwood Historical Society and

- Our Buddies Veterans of Foreign Wars post.
- Member of Northwood United Methodist Church choir for 35 years and Sunday school teacher for senior high grades from 1961 to 1970.
- Public address announcer for all home high school football games from 1961 to 1981 and also for local invitational wrestling tournaments for the same period and also served as play-by-play announcer at church league softball games in Swensrud Park for many years in the 1960s.
- He was awarded Northwood's TUNE Award for community service in 1981 and was Secretary and fund-raising chairman for North Central Iowa six-county Red Cross Chapter for 12 years as well as fund-raising consultant for Minnesota and Iowa Red Cross Territory #5 based in Minneapolis.
- He was also a Member of the Board of Directors of North Iowa Area Community College Foundation in Mason City.
- Past Chapter Chairman and Adjutant Treasurer for Iowa Department of Ex-Prisoners of War.
- Gave public talks to high school classes and civic groups and radio interviews around North Iowa about his POW experiences.

Charlie was actively involved in Northwood's Masonic Northern Light Lodge and served as its Worshipful Master in 1983 and 1984. He was a mentor to many new, young Masons with their own Masonic advancement. In 1989 he received the T.S. Parvin Masonic Award from the Grand Lodge of Iowa. This award is given once each year to the most "Outstanding" Mason in the state of Iowa. He received his 50-year certificate as a Master Mason in 1997.

Charlie organized a Masonic-sponsored chapter of DeMolay for teen-aged young men in Northwood in 1962, and while serving as Chapter "Dad," inducted over 100 teens into the Order from 1962-1969. He participated in fund-raising projects such as the DeMolay food stand at the county fair in the 60's and received the DeMolay Legion of Honor Award in 1965 and the DeMolay Legion of Merit Award for the State of Iowa in 1971.

He had a life-long interest in expanding his knowledge, whether it be reading, memorizing poetry, listening to and appreciating classical music, singing in the choir, philosophizing about lofty thoughts and had affection for his fellow man and community that far surpasses the norm. He loved to golf, laugh, tell jokes and crack us up with his re-telling of them and of wild far-flung dreams.

Charlie loved to write. For much of the '50s he wrote a monthly article for the "Motion Picture Herald," a national magazine catering to movie theatre owners. Townsfolk may

recall reading several articles and occasional letters to the editor in "The Anchor" by Charlie, usually containing his observations of life. His family treasures the wealth of personal letters each received from him over the years, always reflecting on life and the preciousness of it. A special writing reflected his thoughts and feelings after he sat/laid between a row of garden peas watching them emerge through the soil and the true miracle that it represented.

The Northwood Public Library has copies of Charlie's autobiographical book (written in 3rd person) entitled *"The Water and The Rock"* and also another book called *"Only the Least of Me is Hostage"* compiled by a non-profit organization called TRACES in its Volume I on Midwest POWs in Nazi Germany. It has a 70-page chapter that summarizes Charlie's book and also contains entries from his diaries he kept during his years as a POW, as well as letters he wrote to Myrtle during those years.

Charlie was one-of-a-kind, a man of deep thought, civic responsibility and family pride. He touched many lives and gave so much of himself to so many. In the 26 months of his time as a POW, he later wrote in his book about remembering all he had to lay claim to at that point was his life, and hoped if he ever got out alive, he knew he had to make the most of what had been given back to him after liberation, and thus Charlie embarked on a new chapter in his life, marrying Myrtle three weeks after returning to Iowa, and started his civilian life over anew as a husband and several years later as a father of five.

He felt his purpose in life was fulfilled over the years as he and Myrtle built a loving family and faced all of life's challenges together. His book's title (*"The Water and The Rock*") originates from his retelling in the book of an old neighbor's wise adage about facing challenges when he told him: *"The steady dripping of water will wear away the largest rock."* An old Chinese proverb says the same thing, but differently: *"The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials."*

Charlie's life was not without its challenges or trials. He hammered away at them and carved out a wonderful life, never forgetting his past but always going forward and giving back for the life he was rewarded with. He polished himself into a gem of a man and it's an honor to say he was my Dad!

Charlie can well be summed up on a personal level by this poem that columnist Dear Abby published on Father's Day in 2001 called "I Had a Father Who Talked With Me." He would enjoy this, as it speaks so well of who and what he was all about. It goes like this:

I HAD A FATHER WHO TALKED WITH ME

I had a father who talked with me—
Allowed me the right to disagree,
To question—and always
answered me, As well he could—and truthfully.
He talked of adventures; horrors
of war;
Of life, its meaning; what love was
for;
How each would always need to
strive
To improve the world to keep it alive.
Stressed the duty we owe one
another
To be aware each man is a
brother.
Words for laughter he also spoke,
A silly song or a happy joke.
Time runs along, some say I'm
wise,
That I look at life with seeing eyes.
My heart is happy, my mind is
free,
I had a father who talked with
me.

Taps

Charlie passed away on September 10, 1999 after an 8-year struggle with a form of Parkinson's Disease. His obituary follows.

Northwood Anchor **Obituaries**

Northwood civic leader Charlie Jones dies

Charles Lloyd Jones, 86, died Friday, Sept. 10, 1999, at the Lutheran Retirement Home, Northwood.

Funeral services were Tuesday at Northwood United Methodist Church with the Rev. Richard Jensen officiating. Burial was in Sunset Rest Cemetery, Northwood, with military graveside honors by Our Buddies VFW Memorial Post No. 6779 of Northwood.

CHARLES JONES

Charlie was born in Audubon in Audubon County, Iowa, on May 26, 1913, to Charles and Ethel (Parrott) Jones. He graduated from Audubon High School in 1931, winning awards in football, baseball, basketball and track and field. He joined the National Guard in 1929 and was activated into federal service in the Army in February 1941, where he served with the 168th Infantry, 34th Red Bull Division in World War II. He was captured in Tunisia, North Africa, on Feb. 17, 1943, thereafter spending 27 months as a POW in camps in Poland and Germany. He was liberated on May 21, 1945, and was honorably discharged as captain in February 1946.

On July 15, 1945, he married Myrtle Polson of Creston and in December bought and operated the Dawn Theater in Elma until March 1954 when fire destroyed the theater and other buildings in the town. He moved to Northwood in 1954 and owned and operated the Northwood Theater until 1960. For a short time Charlie served as town clerk, manager of the Northwood Country Club, column writer for the Northwood Anchor, and thereafter was employed by the Iowa Department of Revenue as an auditor. He retired in June 1978.

Charlie was a member of the United Methodist Church and sang in the choir for many years as well as served on various committees and taught senior high Sunday School in the '60s and '70s. He was a volunteer for and did Red Cross fund-raising and was secretary for the North Iowa Red Cross Chapter from 1986 to 1993. He also was active in the Northeast chapter of ex-POW's and also at the state level.

He served 20 years on the Northwood Park and Recreation Board and many years on the Zoning Board. He was a member of the NIACC Foundation Board from 1986 to 1994. He also served as chairman of the Viking Manor board from 1979 to 1994. He helped to start a local young men's DeMolay chapter and served as its "Dad" in the Northwood Masonic Temple in the '60s and received the DeMolay Legion of Merit Award in 1971. He was a 50-year member of the Masonic Lodge and was also awarded the T.S. Parvin Award for Iowa Masonry and was a member of Northern Lights Masonic Lodge No. 266 as well as VFW Post 6779.

In 1981 he received the T.U.N.E. award for community service to Northwood.

Charlie's voice could be heard all over Northwood in the '60s and '70s when he served as announcer for play-by-play at local high school football games as well as church league softball games in Swensrud Park.

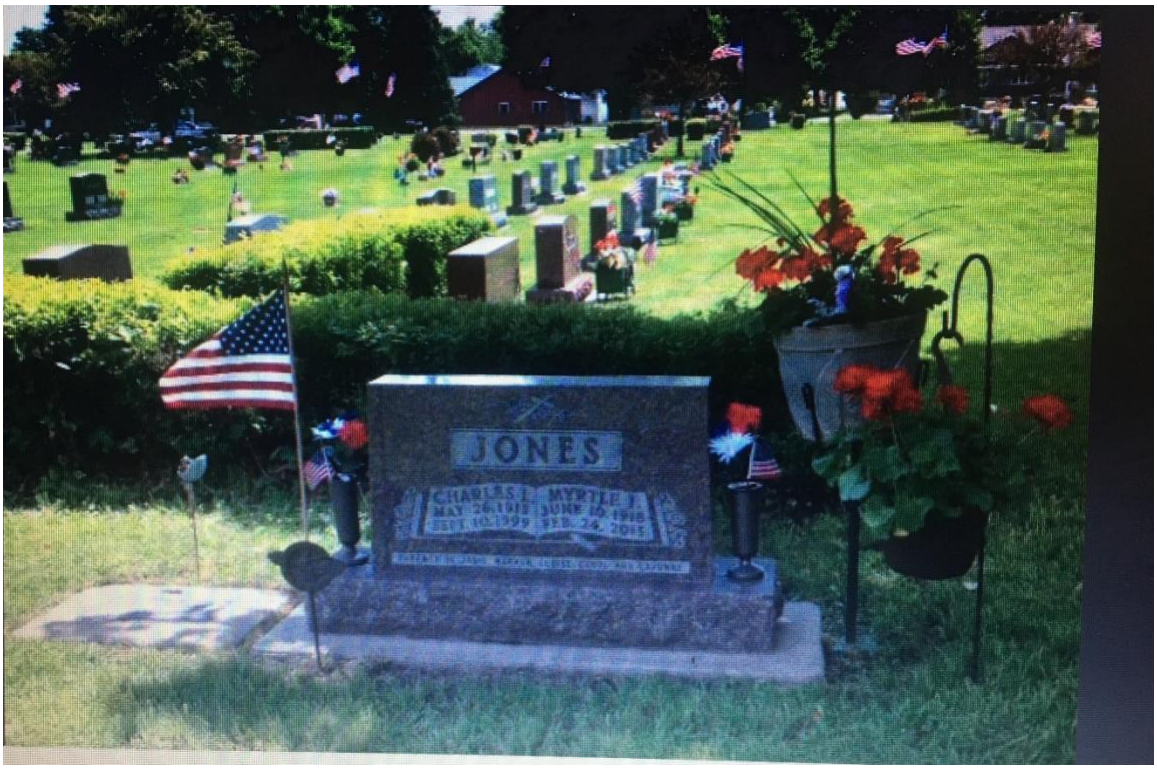
He was an avid golfer, making two holes-in-one over the years. Charlie enjoyed reading, writing, poetry, classical music, good conversation, his children, grandchildren and great-grandson. In 1978 he wrote and had published a book about his POW experiences.

Survivors include his wife Myrtle of Northwood; one son Warren of Los Angeles, CA; four daughters, Janis Hendrickson and her husband Chuck of Lake Mills, Eloise Aldrich and her husband Dwight of Glenville, Carol Jones of Stockton, and Lavonne Spomey and her husband Dave of St. Paul, MN; 10 grandchildren; one great-grandson; two sisters, Rubie Stofferson and her husband Reno of Harlan, and Helen Mense of St. Peters, MO; a brother Ralph of Audubon and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one brother Louis; and a sister Gertrude, who died in infancy.

Memorials may be given to the United Methodist Church, Northwood; North Iowa Chapter of the Red Cross; the Lutheran Retirement Home, Northwood; American Parkinson's Disease Association or Hospice of North Iowa.

Find a Memorial Grave Memorial



Biography written by Warren Jones in collaboration with his siblings.