

Frederick W. Wenzel

U.S. Army POW-Japan



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POW-Japan

Frederick W. Wenzel was born in Springfield, IL and graduated from Springfield High School in the class of 1938. He enlisted in the United States Army Air Force in October 1939 and was assigned to serve with the 17th Pursuit Squadron. This unit was originally stationed at Selfridge Field in Alpena, Michigan.

In 1940, PFC Frederick Wenzel and his unit were ordered to the Philippine Islands and were headquartered at Nichols Field near Manila. He participated in the defense of the Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor before his unit was overrun and Frederick was taken prisoner in 1942. Frederick spent two and a half years (2 1/2) in Cabanatuan prison camp, a Japanese labor camp about 60 miles north of Manila. While in route to Japan, traveling aboard the Japanese ship, Arisan Maru, it was hit by a torpedo in October 1944 and sunk. More than 1800 Prisoners Of War lost their lives. There were 9 survivors.

Frederick Wenzel received the Purple Heart, the American Defense Service Ribbon with a Bronze Star, the Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon with one Bronze Battle Star and the Philippine Defense Ribbon with 2 Bronze Stars.

(Story provided by Frederick's brother)
Francis W. Wenzel
Springfield, Illinois