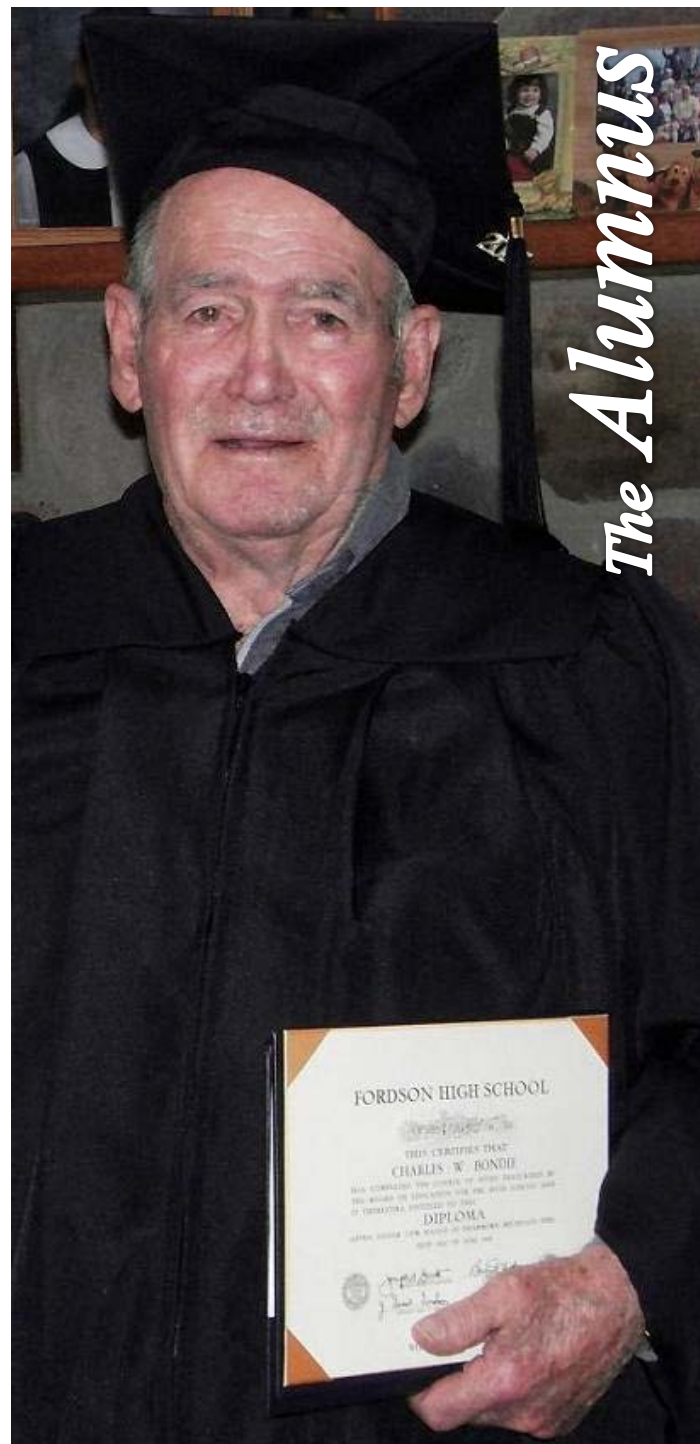




Alumni Association of  
**Fordson High School**  
P.O. Box 1382  
Dearborn, MI 48121

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



**2009 Fordson Graduate and WWII Veteran, Charles W. Bondie**



# FORDSON ALUMNUS

Volume 22, Number 1, June, 2010

**Alumni Association of Fordson High School**  
**P.O. Box 1382**  
**Dearborn, MI 48121**

The Alumni Association of Fordson High School, founded November 12, 1987, is a nonprofit organization commemorating all Fordson High School alumni, faculty and students. The Board of Governors meets on a regular basis throughout the school year.

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The **Fordson Alumnus**, an official publication of the Alumni Association of Fordson High School, invites correspondence and suggestions from Fordson Alumni and friends.

Visit our website at: [www.fordsonalumni.org](http://www.fordsonalumni.org)

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## NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### DEARBORN HOMECOMING

is scheduled for Sunday, August 8 at Ford Field. Look for the Alumni Association booth usually located just north of the class reunion area. Stop by and say "Hello" to the Board members. We're sorry that we are not a clearinghouse for information about the classes meeting at the field and will not be able to answer your questions about particular persons.

### CLASS REUNIONS

**1950:** Plans are underway for a 60th Reunion of the Fordson January/June Class of 1950. The reunion will take place on October 6, 2010 at Park Place, 23400 Park St. in Dearborn. A full lunch will be served along with good conversation from 11:30 till 2:30. The cost is \$18 and you may make your reservation by sending a check to Geraldine Pritchard, 6559 Sunset Dr., Garden City, MI. 48135. No tickets will be sold at the door. For more information or questions, call Geraldine Pritchard 734-427-4261 or Gwen Tomkow 248-477-7676.

**1952:** The January and June classes of 1952 will hold a 58-year reunion September 18 at Park Place, Dearborn. To learn more, contact either [orloff@aol.com](mailto:orloff@aol.com), [mmsmyth@juno.com](mailto:mmsmyth@juno.com), or call 734-432-9308 or 313-562-4378.

**1970:** The Class of 1970 will hold a 40 year reunion August 7 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Dearborn. Deadline to reserve a spot is July 7. To learn more, contact Renea Pistor Callery at 313-505-0331 or at [reneaew@gmail.com](mailto:reneaew@gmail.com).

### FORDSON GRAD HEADS LOCAL RELAY FOR LIFE

Denise Berry Abdullah, Class of '89, and her family and friends dedicated many hours to the Dearborn Relay for Life, culminating

in a most successful event. The relay took place on the outdoor track and soccer fields at the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center on May 1 and 2. Participating teams set up booths and provided information and activities. There was a strong student presence from Fordson as various clubs sponsored food booths, etc. There was live music for the participants as they circled the track while others prepared to set up their tents and/or sleeping areas. All proceeds were donated to the American Cancer Society.

Denise had a dual role, Event Chair and co-captain of the Cool Chicks Conquering Cancer team. Diagnosed six years ago with breast cancer just days before her birthday, she has worked as a survivor to educate the community about the disease. This year her team focused on young women, providing samples of what breast tumors feel like.

Denise had great support and assistance from her husband and Board member, Rich. We are proud of this fine couple and their commitment to the community.

*Source: Press and Guide, 4/28/10*



*Relay for Life walkers lining up at the beginning of the event*

medical people felt sorry for the skeletal looking prisoners, but the food was too rich for the near-starved, shrunken-stomached men. After a couple of weeks of being bedridden and sickly, weight began to increase, and health returned to most of the ex-prisoners.

After leaving the hospital, more treatment was necessary to recondition the mental state of the American prisoners. Classes were attended a couple of hours a day to rehabilitate them. Freedom did wonders towards bringing the men back to normalcy. The men had the freedom of visiting around London for about a month. The ex-prisoners were then sent back to American soil aboard ship, then on to Florida for more rehabilitation...and got the royal treatment that the men sorely needed. They were put up in posh hotel rooms. They could order anything they wanted in the luxury of a cafeteria run by the American government. After about a month of this, the ex-prisoners were reassigned to their normal duties in different outfits. No more war for these men who had seen enough hard times. Anything royal given to them was earned and deserved after what they had been through.

*Thank you for your service, Charlie!*



*Charlie Bondie during his service years*

freedom we knew was coming. However, the Americans warned the Germans not to march the prisoners out of camp, for fear the war planes of the Allies may machine gun the prisoners, thinking they were German soldiers.

A few days before General Montgomery's British forces freed the camp, everyone knew something was happening. The main German guards left the camp to a few old guards, to keep the prisoners from rioting when the British troops were near. The old guards knew they would be captured by the Allies, but the prisoners had to be contained until the British forces broke into the prison camp. If the Germans completely deserted the prison camp, the prisoners would break out in the middle of the combat area and perhaps get shot wandering around.

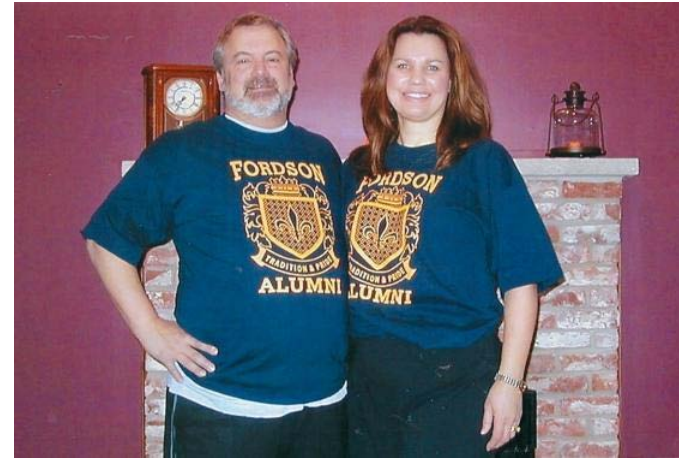
When the British troops came to free the prisoners, they had American Sherman tanks. Few of the prisoners could walk from weakness, but when the tanks were heard, all the prisoners raced to the prison fence to see the liberators. The boost of the morale of the prisoners gave them the extra strength to survive. After the camp was free, some of the men cut holes in the fence and raided German warehouses in the near area. Cans of corned beef were brought back to the barracks to be consumed by the starving prisoners.

The prisoners were turned over to the proper countries they had come from. There were French, Russian, British, American and other Allied countries' prisoners to be turned over to the proper authorities. The process was first to rid the prisoners of their lice-ridden conditions. A chemical called DDT was pumped up everyone's sleeves, pant legs, and down their waists. Doctors checked the condition of the prisoners to see if they could stand the trip to their country's hospital facilities. The American prisoners were trucked to an airport and flown to England, where they were hospitalized.

The American medics at the hospital in London could not believe the condition of the men. There was widespread yellow jaundice (liver disease), malnutrition, typhus, and a number of other serious conditions. After arriving at the hospital, the ex-prisoners were fed too fast, and serious dysentery resulted. The

### **OUR FIRST ONLINE MERCHANDISE CUSTOMERS**

Daniel and Deana (Arnaut) Bossio, Class of '76, purchased Fordson Alumni t-shirts from our recently launched PayPal site.



### **IN MEMORIAM**

We are saddened to report the recent passing of Allie 'Popeye' Berry. He was a great friend of Fordson and could always be found cheering for our teams at athletic events. In March of this year he was inducted into the Dearborn Recreation Department's Special Award Hall of Fame. He was dedicated to the youth of East Dearborn through his work at the Hamood Center.

*Source: Press and Guide, 3/24/10*

### **WORLD WAR II VET AWARDED HIS FORDSON DIPLOMA**

In the Fall 2009 issue of the Alumnus, the editor wrote an article about the WWII veterans who had served in the military after leaving high school now receiving their diplomas. The impetus for this article came from an inquiry by the granddaughter of Charles 'Charlie' W. Bondie. Since that time he has received his Fordson diploma. It is with pleasure that we include his written memories. We have permission to share these with you.

*The nation recently remembered those who have served in the time of war at Memorial Day. The Fourth of July, Independence Day is also a most fitting time to honor all veterans and those serving in the military as they protect the freedoms our Founding Fathers established in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The following are the memories of one who served so that we may enjoy those freedoms.*

***The Story of a WWII Infantryman in Europe***  
***By Charles W. Bondie***

After Basic training, our outfit, the 94th Infantry Division left New York City on August 6, 1944, via the big Queen Elizabeth liner – destination unknown. Aerial escort (a blimp) was provided the first day out as an extra lookout. After that, our only protection was speed and deck guns. We were overcrowded and extremely hot, being double-loaded. We wore or carried life jackets at all times. Nothing was thrown overboard so as not to draw the attention of German U-boats. Every evening there was a blackout. There were some 18,000 troops and 85,000 tons of shipping, so Queen Elizabeth was a lush target for the Nazis.

We landed at Greenock, Scotland less than six days later. The English railway took us to Wiltshire County in southern England. My regiment, the 301st, wound up in Trowbridge, the 302nd at Grittleton, and the 376th at Pinkney Park and Sheraton. The 319th Engineers were in Bronham and Milksham. Here we were, all prepared and double-checked and armed, waiting for a hit on German-occupied French soil.

By August 30 we were alerted and on September 6 our outfit was in France. We got credit for being a part of the Normandy Invasion although we came later (after all, the Germans were still very close). We landed at Utah Beach, which is near St. Marie du Mont, France. This is located in the northern part, near Cherbourg. The division proceeded to Rimes, where we split to hold the enemy

only seat on which to sit while relieving one's self.

Later, when the spring thaw started, work parties were formed. The workers were trucked or marched to farms to plant evergreen trees or cut wood. Planting the trees was easy work, but cold, wet, four-inch trees were hard on the fingers. American prisoner work-parties were done by taking turns, rotating the work load. Sometimes there were trees to be cut for firewood for the farmer. The trees were only about eight inches thick, but due to weakness, it took two men a long time to cut through one with a small, two-man saw.

Geneva Convention rules mention that workers should be paid by the Germans. Humane treatment and pay for labor performed for a foreign country by prisoners of war were the rules of war. You would think that a war would have no rules. However, the Germans did pay the workers, but with nothing but worthless cigarette papers and matches, but no tobacco. Work parties ceased when the prisoners got too weak to do any more.

No one could wash-up or bathe or shave, so all prisoners started to look like very thin, starved, dirty, run-down bums. It wasn't long before the run-down bodies were covered with body lice which caused the disease Typhus to be widespread throughout the prison. The long days with nothing to do were spent scratching the lice bites and cleaning the lice eggs from the seams of clothing where the lice bred and hatched.

There was a free port called Lubeck, north of the prison camp, where the American Red Cross would bring parcels for the prisoners. Some of the parcels reached the prisoners, but not many. Each parcel containing food was supposed to support the needs of one prisoner. However, the parcels were stolen by the Germans, and not all the Red Cross sent was distributed to the poor prisoners. A single-man parcel was split-up between four men. The parcels contained powdered milk, cigarettes, and little else.

In the camp, there was a secret underground group that could get the news of the war somehow. Now and then we were briefed on how the war was going. When we found out the British were headed our way, our spirits soared. Before that, spirits were very low. The Germans threatened to march us further away from the

Cigarettes, jewelry, pens or anything was traded. The captives were hungry and desperate.

There were no toilet facilities on the train, except a bucket which sloshed all over the floor when the train lurched. The bucket was emptied now and then, but never in time to keep it from spilling onto the straw bedding on the floor of the boxcar. Some prisoners got so sick from dysentery that they were taken off the train to be treated. I doubt if they survived, as the Germans either did not care or did not have the facilities to hospitalize the sick from the train.

Germany was slowly getting beaten in the war, and supplies for prisoners were at a minimum. Food was almost unheard of during the long days on the prison train. After the train ride to prison, there was another long march to the actual prison camp. On the march to the prison, the older German soldiers who could not fight on the front lines were the guards. Treatment from these older guards was better.

After arriving at a prisoner of war camp called Stalag 11B, the Americans were put in the barracks to live. It was January and cold. The barracks had no heat. The beds were double-deckers with nothing but straw to lie on. There was an open fireplace with which to cook anything – if you had it.

Food supplied was very little. The fare for one day started with boiled barley tea in the morning. At noon, there was more boiled barley tea and about a fourth of a slice of bread, sour and dark. In the evening, at supper time, there was more solid food. This consisted of one bite of horse meat, one teaspoon of salt or sugar, two one-inch diameter potatoes, and a cup of cabbage soup. The salt or sugar ration came only a couple times a week.

The American prisoners were losing about three to four pounds a week from malnutrition. Weakness from not enough food would soon bring on diseases with the dirty condition and no baths.

The toilet facilities were very unsanitary. A large building with just a roof and a concrete ditch running the length of it was the latrine. The ditch was deep, running down the center of the building and about ten feet wide. Water trickled the length of the ditch, supposedly to wash away the waste. Log rails provided the

in pockets that been too costly to take from the Germans. So my outfit went on to Pontivy, then to Quimperly and the Lorient pocket where 20 – 25,000 Germans were bottled up. The other regiments went to St. Nazaire, held by 35,000 enemy troops. Our job was to contain the enemy forces at Lorient and St. Nazaire. We were mixed right in with the FFI (French Forces of the Interior), also called Maquis or FTP – French Partisans. These troops of the French were good patriots who jumped in to help after the Americans assumed control of Brittany. They were poorly organized and ill equipped, with no chain of command. Equipment was partly Allied and partly enemy-taken. There was no standard uniform, so the French army was a mess, but General de Gaulle was revitalizing and reorganizing the military.

Our outfit (the 301st) was the first to take German prisoners. The whole of our division was stretched over half of France as the forgotten front, but we were ever active with combat and recon patrols to harass the enemy. At the very end of the year we were relieved with 2,700 enemy casualties and 566 POWs taken, while 100 men in our division lost their lives. We had 618 wounded and one missing in action, who probably became a prisoner of the Germans. We contained in pockets over 60,000 of the enemy, which were twice as many men as we had.

From Brittany we went to LeMans, where we bivouacked, then on to Versailles and to within ten miles of Paris, then on to Reims. We were heading into the big battles. We jumped right in at the Battle of the Bulge, then on to Verdun and Metz. From there on, our regiments took Lettengen, Butzdirf, Berg, and Wies in Germany. My infantry regiment was scheduled to take Orsholz, which unknown to us, was all fortified by the enemy. We were caught in the middle of the Seigfried Line.

Orsholz is on a hill and was surrounded by massive pill-boxes (well-armed concrete forts). Everything about the town was in the Germans' favor – no way could the Americans overrun the place. Our company (Company B, 301st Infantry), about 200 men, became trapped and later captured by the Germans, but I saw more action in that one battle than a lot of guys saw all through the war. So much for my escapades with the 94th. Some other time I'll tell

you about where I went after my capture at Orshotz.

The division, minus our whole regiment (which soon was replaced) went on to take Sinz and Bannholz, and went right on the the Saar River. Toward the end of February, the 94th was bridgeheading the Saar Riiver in the Saarburg and Serrig areas. After bridgeheading the Saar and Moselle Rivers, our army division, the good old 94th, was stretched for 10 miles, from Hamm to Ollmuth. By the middle of March, German resistance along the front began to collapse and there was a race to the Rhine, with our troops flying on to Ludvigshafen where the greatest German chemical plant - the I.G. Farben Industries - was located on the Rhine River. My division was then relieved to go back to a rest area. They went back through Baumholder, Saarlatern, and Thionville, then through Luxembourg to Bastogne, Belgium. From there they proceeded on to the Liege in Belgium, then north to Willich, Germany near Dusseldorf, where they occupied the zone there. In June, the 94th Infantry Division went back through Germany from Dusseldorf through Limburg, Nurnberg, Pilsen, and Susice in Bohemia or Czechoslovakia, where occupation forces were set up. There, in Czechoslovakia, the division broke up as men turned toward home. The division was disbanded and inactivated at Camp Kilmer, N.J. in January – February, 1946.

***AMERICAN PRISONER OF WAR IN GERMANY DURING  
WORLD WAR II  
By Charles Bondie***

Company B was in Orsholz, Germany, on the highly fortified Siegfried Line. The Line was a trench line - pill boxes and tank traps - between Germany and France. Pill boxes are cement, domed buildings with cannons and machine guns in them.

Company B, 301st Infantry Battalion, 94th Division was trapped. Short of ammunition, freezing cold, and in a heavily mined area there was no escape. The German Army knew exactly where the Americans were. The Americans were heavily shelled during the night. The Americans were in trenches, but the Germans knew where, and lobbed grenades in the trenches. Many American

soldiers were killed during the night, and the moans from the wounded could be heard all night.

The next day, as the Americans tried to withdraw, the trenches were blocked by dead comrades, and the soldiers had to actually walk on their dead buddies. Finally leaving the trenches, the company ran across open ground toward a deserted house for cover. Bullets from the Germans were hitting all around the Americans. Some of the Americans who weren't actually hit by rifle fire had bullet holes in their jackets from near misses.

Once inside the deserted house, the captain of Company B ordered all the men to destroy their weapons to keep them out of the enemy's hands. For the sake of saving the rest of his men, the captain decided to surrender. A white surrender flag was waved out of the doorway, and the surrender process took place.

Being a prisoner of war, one does not have time to be fearful of what might happen. Confusion and wonderment seems to take the place of fear. The front line soldiers were fairly decent to the American prisoners they took...knowing what a soldier goes through. The farther behind enemy lines the Americans were marched, the harsher the treatment was. Civilians taunted them and spat upon them. In sub-zero temperatures and fairly deep snow, the Americans' overshoes were taken away. The prisoners were marched for miles. Some attempt to truck them was made, but icy roads prevented this, with the trucks getting stuck regularly.

Finally, after several days of capture, with not much to eat except a little bit of bread and sausage once a day, the American prisoners came to a prison train. The prisoners were crammed into small boxcars called 40 Hommes/8 Cheveaux, meaning a capacity of forty men or eight horses. On these boxcars, the cramping of the prisoners made it almost impossible to sleep. Cold, tired, and hungry, a buddy and I sat facing each other, with our unshod feet tucked under each other's armpits for warmth. Later I learned that some of the prisoners lost parts of their toes from frostbite. For about three or four days on the crowded train there was no food, except when the train stopped. Then some of the prisoners would trade their valuables for bits of food, which was only dark, sour bread. The German guards did the trading with the prisoners.