Life of a Prisoner of War (POW)

**Primary Sources**

International Committee of the Red Cross Report, April 17, 1945

Missing Report, 1944

Letter from Major General J.A. Ulio to Mary Akimoto, November 11, 1944

Photograph, *Reenacting the liberation of Stalag IX - B*, April 2, 1945

*Comite International de la Croix-Rouge*, December 1944

Letter from Major General J.A. Ulio to Mary Akimoto, April 19, 1945

War Department Telegram to Mary Akimoto, May 8, 1945

Letter from Mary Akimoto to War Department, February 14, 1945

Photograph, *Liberated Soldiers at Bad Orb Eating C-Rations*, April 2, 1945

Request for Disposition of Remains, November 24, 1947

**Secondary Sources**

Excerpt, Matthew Elms, *When the Akimotos Went to War*
Group Four Task Card

You will have 30 minutes to prepare a 2 - 3 minute skit that includes all of your group members. The skit will:

1. Introduce the capture of Victor Akimoto
2. Present conditions of POW Camp at Bad Orb
3. Present Mary at Amache Internment Camp
International Committee of the Red Cross Report, April 17, 1945

Department of the Army

COPY OF INCOMING CABLEGRAM:
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS
DELEGATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Translation

Cable received from: Intercoirossoe
Geneva, Switzerland

Date sent: April 17, 1945
Date received: April 19, 1945

April 19, 1945

1564 GENERAL VIST WEREKED IX FROM 6TH TO 21ST MARCH FOLLOWING CAMPS
OFLAG II/A/H/Z STALAGS IX/A IX/B IX/C LAZARETS STUTTHOF, HILDEBRANDHUSEN
BAHUCHE SETRE SWINGEN, SCHLITZ, TURNA SITUATION CRITICAL FOR
THOSE THERE SINCE BEGINNING AND PRISONERS EVACUATED UNDER VERY BAD
CONDITIONS FROM CAMPS IN THE EAST CONSIDERABLE LOSS OF WEIGHT/DYSENTERY
DIARRHEA/HEMORRHOIDAL/GENERALIZED PNEUMONIA/HYGIENE NONEXISTENT/VERMIN
SHARMS/DANGER TYPHUS/CLOTHING IN SHARMS/STOP DRRARES AND TENTS
OVERCROWD PRISONERS SLEEP ON BARE FLOORS OR UNCLEAN STRAW/STOP
EXTREMELY SMALL PORTIONS OF FOOD STOP STALAG IX/B WITHOUT SALT FOR WEEKS
STOP NO SHIPMENTS SINCE SEVERAL MONTHS SUPPLIES EXTREMELY URGENTLY
NEEDED FOOD CLOTHING SHOES DRUGS IN PARTICULAR SULFONAMIDE SULFOPYRIDINE
OPiates DISINFECTANTS SUCH AS TOBREXIPEN (“SWISS PREPARATION ZM MERCUR-BRONCHITIS WITH BROMINE”) ANTIDOTOPHIA SERUM TYPHUS VACCIN PENICILLIN
MATERIAL FOR DRESSINGS BLANKETS UTENSILS STOP GRAVE DANGER OF EPIDEMICS
SANITARY INSTALLATIONS ALTOGETHER INSUFFICIENT SOAP TOILET PAPER
COMPLETELY LACKING STOP GENERAL APATHY REPRESENTATIVES HARRASSED WITH
QUESTIONS HIGH PERCENTAGE DIES STOP OFLAGS RELATIVELY BETTER NO NEW
ARRIVALS OF PRISONERS FOOD CONDITIONS BETTER BUT NO SHIPMENTS OF FOOD
RECEIVED NECESSITY CONSTITUTE RESERVES FOR FUTURE ARRIVAL EVACUES STOP
LAZARETS NOT IN AS POOR CONDITION AS STALAGS BECAUSE PRISONER LESS
NUMEROUS MEDICAL CARE STILL SUFFICIENT BUT SYMPTOMS OF DISEASE CAUSED
BY UNDERNOURISHMENT

INTERCOIrossoe 15740
Missing Report, 1944
Department of the Army

NAME: AKIMOTO, Victor
ASW 19 078 557
GRADE: Pvt
Arm or Branch: Service Inf
GRN: Co A 100th En, 442d Inf
APO: 758
REPORTED MIA: 23 Oct 44
MISSION: Being evacuated to the rear aid station
POINT OF DEPARTURE: Diffontaine, France
REASON FOR EVACUATION: Evacuation due to enemy action
DATE: 23 Oct 44
INTENDED DESTINATION: En Aid Station, V255976
LAST KNOWN WHEREABOUTS: V312582, Map, Eastern France, Bruyeres, 1/50,000

REMARKS: (Any information not covered above, including details and results of search, if any, conducted)

ENTIRE GROUP OF CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING DISAPPEARANCE:
Pvt Akimoto, 19078557, was a litter case and he was being evacuated to the rear aid station with several other wounded soldiers. Apparently this group lost their way in the thickly wooded area and ran into an enemy patrol. The entire group were presumably captured with the exception of a few who escaped.

STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES, IF ANY:

REMARKS: (Any information not covered above, including details and results of search, if any, conducted)
Letter from Major General J.A. Ulio to Mary Akimoto, November 11, 1944

Department of the Army

This letter is to confirm my recent telegram in which you were regretfully informed that your son, Private Victor Akimoto, 19, 078th Infantry, has been reported missing in action in France since 23 October 1944.

I know that added distress is caused by failure to receive more information or details. Therefore, I wish to assure you that at any time additional information is received it will be transmitted to you without delay, and, if in the meantime no additional information is received, I will again communicate with you at the expiration of three months.

The term "missing in action" is used only to indicate that the whereabouts or status of an individual is not immediately known. It is not intended to convey the impression that the case is closed. I wish to emphasize that every effort is exerted continuously to clear up the status of our personnel. Under war conditions this is a difficult task as you must readily realize. Experience has shown that many persons reported missing in action are subsequently reported as prisoners of war, but as this information is furnished by countries with which we are at war, the War Department is helpless to expedite such reports. However, in order to relieve financial worry, Congress has enacted legislation which continues in force the pay, allowances and allotments to dependents of personnel being carried in a missing status.

 Permit me to extend to you my heartfelt sympathy during this period of uncertainty.

Sincerely yours,

J. A. ULIO
Major General, The Adjutant General.
Photograph, *Reenacting the liberation of Stalag IX - B, April 2, 1945*

U.S. Army Signal Corps (111-SC-339369)
Comite International de la Croix-Rouge, December 1944

Department of the Army

German

Nach der Amputation des rechten Beines hat Kranker der Artzin die Mitteilung gemacht, sterben zu wollen und daraufhin jede Nahrungsaufnahme verweigert.

English Translation

Following the amputation of the right leg, the patient informed the doctor that he wants to die (sterben zu wollen) and therefore refused all food (Nahrungsaufnahme).
Letter from Major General J.A. Ulio to Mary Akimoto, April 19, 1945

Department of the Army

Dear Mrs. Akimoto:

It is with deep regret that I am writing to confirm the recent telegram informing you of the death of your son, Private Victor Akimoto, 19,070, 257, Infantry, who was previously reported missing in action on 23 October 1944 in France.

Information has now been received from the German Government through the International Red Cross stating that your son died on 14 December 1944 as a result of wounds received in action. It is reported that he died in a hospital.

I realize the burden of anxiety that has been yours and deeply regret the sorrow this report brings you. May the knowledge that he made the supreme sacrifice for his home and country be a source of sustaining comfort.

I extend to you my deepest sympathy.

Sincerely yours,

J. A. ULIO
Major General
The Adjutant General of the Army

1 Enclosure
WE Pamphlet No. 20-15
War Department Telegram to Mary Akimoto, May 8, 1945

Department of the Army

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Telegram

OFFICIAL BUSINESS—GOVERNMENT RATES

AG 201  AKIMOTO VICTOR  PVT  19 APR 45  ASK 19 076 557  SON

MRS MARY M AKIMOTO
11-G  10-A
AMACHE COLORADO

REPORT NOW RECEIVED FROM THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS STATES YOUR SON PRIVATE 21 VICTOR AKIMOTO WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED MISSING IN ACTION DIED OF WOUNDS ON FOURTEEN DECEMBER THE SECRETARY OF WAR EXTENDS HIS DEEP SYMPATHY CONFIRMING LETTER BARRIS

ROBERT H DUNLOP
ACTING THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

OFFICIAL

ADJUTANT GENERAL  BATTLE
Letter from Mary Akimoto to War Department, February 14, 1945

Department of the Army

Transcription

11G – 10A

Amache, Colorado

February 14, 1945

War Department

The Adj. Generals Office

Washington, D.C.

Re: A G 201 Akimoto, Victor

PC – N InJO 273

Dear Sirs:

It has been over three months since your telegram of November 10th and your letter of November 11th in regards to our son, Victor (19078557) who has been missing in action since October 23rd. We lost one son, John in Italy on August 2, 1944 so you can well understand why we are anxious to get some information about Victor.

According to your letter you stated that you would communicate with us again after the expiration of three months. Since we haven’t heard from you we are writing to see if you have been able to obtain any further information.

Could you please let us know at the earliest possible time?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mr. & Mrs. M. Akimoto
Excerpt, *When the Akimotos Went to War*

When amputation became the only option, new problems faced Victor. With medications in short supply, including anesthetics such as ether, Victor faced having his leg removed while still conscious. Anesthetics allowed doctors to put patients to sleep and to conduct operations without causing pain to the patient. However, these drugs were probably not available to Victor or any other POW. Germany reserved medical supplies for soldiers and civilians, not Allied prisoners of war. Perhaps the doctors had access to a bit of alcohol, which would have made him drunk, or chloroform, which would have helped to put him to sleep. Both of these could have helped to reduce the pain.

Other POWs held down Victor’s shoulders, torso, and legs. A tight belt or piece of rope, used to restrict blood flow, may have been used. The tourniquet would reduce bleeding. Victor bit down on a stick while the doctors sawed through the thigh tissues and bone.

They amputated his infected leg.

After the procedure, Victor recovered enough to speak to his doctor. He had one request, no more food.
Photograph, *Liberated Soldiers at Bad Orb Eating C-Rations*, April 2, 1945

US Army Signal Corps (111-SC-231077)
Request for Disposition of Remains, November 24, 1947

Department of the Army

[Image of the request form]