



# **Shadows of Slaughterhouse Five: Recollections and Reflections of the Ex-POWs of Schlachthof Fünf, Dresden, Germany**

*Ervin E. Szpek Jr., Frank J. Idzikowski, Heidi M. Szpek Ph.D.*

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Shadows of Slaughterhouse Five chronicles the story of 150 American POWs captured in the Battle of the Bulge and eventually caught up in one of the greatest tragedies of World War II - the firebombing of Dresden. This collection includes oral histories, previously unpublished memoirs, and letters from home and from the front that together tell their compelling story in their own words. From simple hometown beginnings through the awakenings of military life in basic training, from assignment on the supposed "quiet zone" in Belgium to the unexpected Battle of the Bulge, from forced march and entrainment to eventual assignment on work details in Dresden - the "Florence of the Elbe," to the inferno of Dresden on February 13-14, 1945, and the gruesome work details to follow, the individual and collective recollections and reflections of these 150 young men, the men housed in the famed Slaughterhouse Five, reveal a very personal side of war and the struggle for survival. Yet repatriation did not bring closure to this chapter of their young lives for like shadows their memories would forever be part of them. Today more than sixty years after the firebombing of Dresden, the statue of a steer wishing health and happiness to the citizens of Dresden still stands at the entrance to the public slaughterhouse, a silent witness to the maelstrom that descended upon Dresden and this group of 150 American POWs housed within. Now after more than 60 years of silence for most of these men, Kurt Vonnegut's fellow POWs tell their story of Slaughterhouse Five, in their words as they saw it - dog face young soldiers assured that the war was soon to be over!

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