



**THE MASS SURRENDER OF
GERMAN TROOPS TO THE
347th INFANTRY REGIMENT
ON MAY 6, 1945**

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❖ Prologue

Earlier this year, while reviewing the 87th Infantry Division's history on the Internet, I was surprised to read that our [Division is credited](#) with capturing only 10,282 German Prisoners of War during World War II. Having been personally involved in the acceptance **on May 6, 1945** of the formal surrender of over 40,000 Wehrmacht (German Regular Army) and Schutzstaffel (SS) troops¹, including a considerable number of high ranking general officers -- **a day before the Unconditional Surrender of all German Forces was signed and three days before active operations were ordered to cease** -- I contacted John "Mac" McAuliffe² to determine if he had any information regarding what I consider to be an obvious discrepancy in our Division's history. It is interesting to note that a review of the official records contained in the National Archives pertaining to our Division, particularly those of the 347th Infantry and its 3rd Battalion, clearly reveal that a number of these surrendering Wehrmacht and SS troops began to enter our lines on May 7, two days before ALL active operations were to cease at 001B, 9 May, 1945 between the Germans and the Allied Expeditionary Forces (AEF).

Mac promptly informed me that as he was leaving our Division's 2002 reunion, he was handed information pertaining to the mass surrender by Ray Miles.³ The information included a letter written and signed by a German general,⁴ with a subject line of "*Report Concerning the Canceling of Discharge Papers Issued in Connection with the Surrender to*

¹ The German fighting forces consisted of the Wehrmacht (Army, Navy and Air Force) and the Schutzstaffel (SS). The SS consisted of Adolph Hitler's personal guard and the Waffen-SS, elite troops who fought alongside Wehrmacht units. The SS had evolved into a highly effective and deadly force during World War II. Hitler had given the SS jurisdiction over all concentration camps and allowed them to oversee the day-to-day control of all countries conquered by Germany during the war.

² John McAuliffe was a member of M Company, 347th Infantry Regiment. He is the historian for 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry Regiment, and was also Commander of the 87th Infantry Division Association from 1998-1999.

³ Capt. Ray Miles commanded Company I, 347th Infantry prior to, and at the time of the surrender.

⁴ Generalmajor Eisenbach, CG, Feldkommandantur 641/Field Command Post 641.

the American Army". The letter, written in German with an English translation, was addressed to Major Withers, who commanded the 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry. Also included was a personal note from Major Withers addressed to Capt. Miles explaining the purpose of the German general's letter. The original letter, and an English translation can be found in the Appendix.

During our conversation, Mac recalled an article I had written concerning the mass surrender.⁵ My article includes a reprint of a letter, passed by my Company L, 347th Infantry censor, which I wrote on May 12, 1945 to my father. I mentioned in that hastily written letter that prior to Germany's final surrender, I had ventured deep into enemy territory and obtained the surrender of two complete German Infantry Divisions. I learned later, long after World War II was over, that the surrender included an entire German Army Corps, its divisions plus a number of other odd and assorted units involving more than 40,000 Wehrmacht and SS troops. Also included were at least twenty officers holding the rank of general whose names and units are listed below.

Before sending a copy of the letter to the GAN⁶, I had both the original letter and its envelope notarized so that the GAN's Editor, Jim Amor, would know that the events stated therein were as stated in the original letter -- that they were not some "cock and bull combat story" rattling around in an old soldier's hazy memory of an event which took place more than fifty years earlier.

After discussing the surrender with Mac, he informed me that Ray Miles had promised Major Withers that a written record would be made, so that details of the mass surrender of the Germans to our battalion and regiment would not be lost to posterity. Ray, in turn, asked Mac to prepare the record. After learning that I had been directly involved in obtaining the surrender, Mac asked me to prepare an article for possible publication in the GAN. Upon receiving a similar request from Ray Miles, I agreed to do so, but only after visiting the [National Archives](#), located in College Park, Maryland. By searching the Archive's official records of the 87th Infantry Division, the 347th Infantry Regiment and it's 3rd Battalion, I wanted to make certain that my memory of the actual events, which occurred more than 58 years earlier, had not been too dimmed by time, or had become figments in an old soldier's imagination.

Although the terms of Germany's unconditional surrender signed on May 7, 1945, provided there would be no further active operations after midnight on May 8/9, I learned later that the 3rd Battalion, 347th Regiment did not get the news of the formal surrender until late on May 7, at which time we were told to immediately cease all offensive operations in our sector. The delay, we were told, was because our 87th Division Headquarters had been

⁵ *The Golden Acorn News*, June 1999 issue, pp. 34 - 35.

⁶ An acronym for the *Golden Acorn News*. This is a newsletter published quarterly by the 87th Infantry Division Association.

instructed not to use any radios to disseminate that information to its lower echelons. Naturally, we were overjoyed by the news since we had been given to understand that the Germans, particularly all SS units and other diehard Wehrmacht elements were planning to retreat into Czechoslovakia and the mountains of Bavaria where they would continue to fight as "Werewolf" units, shooting anyone who tried to surrender to the Americans and Russians. The "werewolf" rumor was later confirmed in documentation we captured from German forces.



Major Withers, 3rd Bn Commander with German General

Concerning the cessation of actual hostilities, it is interesting to note, as stated in the letter addressed to Major Withers and signed by the German general Eisenbach⁷, that the Germans believed the suspension of hostilities would not occur until the night of May 8/9, 1945. This was more than a full day after we had been ordered to cease all further offensive operations. It also is important to note, as stated in Eisenbach's letter, that when his command crossed the American

lines controlled by the 3rd Battalion on May 10, Major Withers placed Eisenbach in overall command of three POW camps which already had been established by the 3rd Battalion "in the area of Tannenbergsthal - Rautenkranz and it would be my [Eisenbach's] responsibility to assure law, order and discipline in these camps." Major Withers stated in his previously mentioned note to Ray Miles that although several German generals of higher rank already had entered our lines before Eisenbach arrived, he placed Eisenbach in command of the camps because Eisenbach "was about my size so I made him the Commandant of all their people."

To provide a deeper appreciation of the events which occurred several weeks prior to, during, and following the German surrender in the 87th Infantry Division's sector of operations, here is what happened as best as I and those who assisted me in writing this article remember it, coupled with information I found in the National Archives.

⁷ Generalmajor Eisenbach's troops were among the Wehrmacht and SS troops who surrendered to the 347th Infantry Regiment on May 6.

❖ The Capture of Plauen

On April 16, 1945, after having been in the forefront of many battles fought by General George S. Patton's Third Army in France, Belgium, Luxemburg and Germany, the 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry Regiment participated in the capture Plauen, Germany. The city – a railroad and vital industrial center with a pre-war population of 110,000 – had been heavily damaged by aerial bombardment on or about April 10, 1945, because it contained a number of factories, ordnance plants and workshops producing war materiel, including a plant (Vogtlandische Maschinenfabrik AG of Plauen) known to be manufacturing Panzer tanks for the Wehrmacht. It also contained a large number of warehouses containing German army weapons, equipment, food rations and war materiel. Additional damage was inflicted on the city by the 87th Infantry Division's 334th Field Artillery Battalion, which provided covering fire as the 347th Infantry Regiment began its assault on Plauen.



Destroyed buildings and rubble-strewn streets of Plauen

Most of the buildings we observed as we moved deeper into Plauen had been severely damaged, many with only a few walls remaining; others were totally destroyed. The majority of the city's streets, many with gaping bomb craters, were nearly impassable; although the infantry and accompanying tanks were able to move through them after encountering light resistance from the German troops defending the city. During the 347th Infantry Regiment's attack on Plauen, Company L -- with Lt. Lew Goad's 1st Platoon leading the way down Pausaer Strasse -- reached a point approximately one kilometer from the Elster River, which divided the city. At the same time Capt. Kidd, Commander of Company L, received a message that one of our spotter aircraft had observed a German platoon-sized force which appeared to be setting demolition charges in preparation of destroying the sole remaining bridge across the river, apparently hoping to delay our advance. Capt. Kidd radioed me saying he wanted my rifle platoon (the 2nd) to move

through the 1st platoon and prevent the Germans from destroying the bridge.



Soldiers of the 87th and German civilians moving through Plauen

To provide my platoon with additional firepower, Capt. Kidd gave me a section of tanks from the tank platoon which had been attached to Company L for the assault on Plauen. Moving through Lew Goad's platoon, and with the tanks following through the rubble-clogged streets, we advanced toward the bridge as quickly as possible. Arriving at the bridge, we observed a number of German troops at the far end. They appeared to be still in the process of setting

up demolition charges under the bridge. Placing one of the tanks on each side of our end of the bridge, I directed them to fire a couple of cannon rounds at the Germans and then open fire with their machine guns along each side of the bridge, while my men and I raced across the bridge hoping to cut the ignition wires, or otherwise neutralize the demolition charges before the bridge was blown. Suffice it to say, aided by the supporting fire laid down by the tanks, I succeeded in neutralizing the demolitions while my men, after capturing a number of German defenders, drove off the remaining German soldiers, without suffering any casualties. Having secured the bridge, I moved the 2nd platoon to higher ground on the far side of the river in order to ward off any counterattack which might be attempted by the Germans.



Elster Bridge in Plauen, several days after it's capture by Company L, 347th Regiment



Tom and Gayla Stafford near Elster Bridge in 1990

I was told several years ago by Ray Stender, who had been assigned as a 2nd Lt. to Company L for a couple of weeks before being transferred to Company K, that shortly after we had secured the bridge and had moved to high ground on the far side of the river, he and his K Company Rifle platoon arrived at the bridge along with other elements of Company L which had been following my platoon. Upon learning from the "tankers" that in my haste to prevent the Germans from blowing up the bridge, I chose not to waste precious time searching and clearing the buildings on our side of the river, knowing that would be done by other Company L elements which were following close behind. Ray said that he decided to join the Company L troops in a search of the buildings and, in the process, he, his men and Company L captured a number of German soldiers, including several officers who were hiding in the buildings' cellars. The Germans apparently had been left to defend the bridge hoping to delay us long enough so that the bridge could be destroyed -- but wisely decided they were not yet ready to die for the "Fatherland". (Note: In 1990, while the Communists were still in control of East Germany, my wife, Gayla, and I visited "our bridge" in Plauen. We learned that the people of Plauen apparently had convinced the authorities to declare the bridge a "National Treasurer." The area at both ends of the bridge, which as of 1990 had been restricted to foot traffic, had been turned into lovely little parks. I later learned that the bridge, known locally as "The Elsterbruecke", is believed to have been constructed prior to 1244, nearly 250 years before Columbus discovered the Americas! If I'm fortunate enough to visit Plauen again, I plan to visit its Bürgermeister(Mayor) and suggest that the city erect a sign letting Plauen's citizens and visitors know that "The Elsterbruecke" was saved for them by American soldiers, members of the 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry Regiment.)

❖ East Meets West - The Movement Toward Czechoslovakia

Immediately following the capture of Plauen, the 347th Infantry Regiment shoved off again. This time our objective was to reach the border between Germany and Czechoslovakia, approximately 15 to 20 miles away. On April 17, the 1st Battalion captured Oelsnitz, apparently with little opposition, while the 2nd Battalion moved into Ober Losa, and the 3rd Battalion cleared the small city of Theuma, cutting the Autobahn (a super military highway) between Theuma and Ober Losa. Although the border of Czechoslovakia now was well within range of our division's artillery, we were told that Major General Culin, our Division Commander, had been ordered by higher headquarters to stop our advance shortly after we captured Plauen. Rumors began to circulate that we were to remain in place to await the coming of Russian forces which had been reported to be approximately twenty-five kilometers eastward of our positions. After driving across Germany to the Czechoslovakian border, usually as the left flank division of General George S. Patton's Third Army, our corps (The US VIII Corps) was transferred to the First Army on April 22, 1945. We were ordered to remain in defensive positions on the First Army's right flank; continue patrolling along our front adjacent to the Third Army (on our right) while waiting for contact by the Russians.

During the next two weeks, having captured a number of towns and villages seven or eight miles east of Oelsnitz and Theuma, including Bergen, Steinigt, Lottengrun, Tirpersdorf, Werda, Arnoldsgrun, and Marieney, the 347th Infantry established and held a front line which ran generally from Falkenstein and Poppengrun on its left flank through the villages of Werda and Schoneck to Wohlbach on its right. While holding this line, nightly patrols were conducted and scattered contact with the enemy to our front continued. During this time period we received considerable incoming rifle and machine gun fire, plus occasional artillery shelling on a daily basis to let us know there were German units in front of us who still were willing to fight. Just south of our lines a group of saboteurs with a load of demolitions was captured by 347th Infantry combat patrols, while several men from our 2nd Battalion were ambushed and captured, in turn, by the Germans. We heard numerous rumors that Germany was on the verge of surrender, but none of those tales proved to be true.

While marking time, waiting for the Russians who were slowly approaching our lines from the East, we were told by Capt. Kidd, our Company Commander, that higher headquarters wanted several men from each company to take a jeep and visit a recently liberated German concentration camp at Buchenwald -- a small village located near Weimar about 70 miles behind our lines -- to bear witness to the unspeakable atrocities which had been found there. Lew Goad and I volunteered to visit Buchenwald and, upon our arrival, will never forget what we saw. Etched forever in my memory were piles of dead bodies, at least 10 to 15 feet high, stacked on the ground in several places. Many more corpses had been loaded in open rail cars, apparently waiting to be moved to the crematory ovens or away from the camp. I remember seeing a number of German civilians inside the camp who had been ordered to go from their homes in Weimar and nearby villages to also bear witness to the atrocities committed by the Nazis.

One of the horrors that Lew and I remember seeing was a small shack located near the crematory ovens, which contained a number of cans with numbers stamped on their lids. We were told that the cans contained the ashes of cremated inmates which could be purchased for a fee by their families. I assume this offer applied only to the families of non-Jewish political prisoners because I am certain no Jewish family member, who might have been hiding somewhere within reach of the Gestapo, would have made their presence known by responding to such offer. I also recall seeing a number of former prisoners milling around inside the camp, so I believe our visit to the camp must have occurred shortly after its liberation.

In fact, I learned later that Buchenwald actually had been discovered on or about April 11, 1945 by a motorized patrol consisting of Capt. Frederick Keffer and three enlisted men from Task Force 9 of 6th Armored Division, while the 87th Infantry Division, having captured Bad Blankenburg to the south, was moving rapidly towards Saalfeld and Plauen. I also learned that shortly after Buchenwald was discovered, a detachment of soldiers and medical personnel from the 87th Infantry Division were sent to the camp to help in providing emergency care and evacuation of the camp's survivors, most of whom were near death or in extremely poor condition.

Although higher headquarters understood that, having captured Plauen we and other allied forces had advanced far beyond the point agreed to by the Allies and the Russians, many of us at the battalion and company level were hoping we would continue to remain in our present positions and wait for the Russians to reach our lines. In fact, during this period, several officers and enlisted men in the 3rd Battalion, including Lt. Isidore Vallorani, had been given "rest and recuperation passes" to visit Paris, France. Vallorani, who had led the 3rd Platoon, Company L from the beginning of the Battle of the Bulge, took over as our Company Executive Officer, thereby becoming second in command of Company L shortly before we entered Plauen.

On the night of May 5, however, we received word that we would wait no longer -- the 347th Infantry Regiment was ordered to attack the next morning, May 6 at 0700 hours, to be followed by the 346th Infantry which was ordered to attack at 0800. The 1st Battalion, 347th Infantry was given the objective of capturing Klingenthal, approximately six miles to the east, while the 3rd Battalion, 347th was given the objective of capturing Tannenbergsthal and Jägersgrün, approximately five miles from our present locations, and close to the border between Germany and Czechoslovakia. Moving out, with Company I headed for its objective of Tannenbergsthal and Company L headed for Jägersgrün, both companies encountered a number of roadblocks (abatis), sometimes only 100 or 200 yards apart for the first mile or so after jumping off enroute to their objectives. These roadblocks consisted of many trees blown down across the narrow roads passing through heavily forested areas. The enemy apparently had erected them when we were forced to hold up, shortly after we had captured Oelsnitz and Theuma. Resistance, however, by the retreating German forces was light, and was soon overcome or bypassed, resulting in the capture of a number of German soldiers.



Remains of a roadblock erected by German troops on the road leading to Jägersgrün



Company L, 347th Regiment Jeep entering Jägersgrün

As Company L approached the outskirts of Jägersgrün, with my platoon (the 2nd) and the 3rd platoon under T/SGT James Scruggs leading the way, Capt. Kidd radioed me saying that a German unit, possibly platoon-size or larger, had been observed in the middle of that village by one of our artillery spotter aircraft. The Germans appeared to be in the process of setting up demolition charges to destroy a bridge that spanned a small river parallel to the railroad tracks that divided that little village. Capt. Kidd

ordered me to coordinate with T/Sgt Scruggs, and move our platoons as quickly as possible into Jägersgrün, to prevent the Germans from destroying the bridge. T/Sgt Scruggs had become "acting platoon leader" of the 3rd Platoon after Lt. Vallorani moved up to become our Company Executive Officer.

Setting up a skirmish line and firing as we entered Jägersgrün, the German defenders quickly scattered, thereby permitting the 2nd Platoon to cross over the bridge and allow me an attempt to neutralize the demolition charges that had been placed under the bridge. Hoping that I could do so before the charges could be ignited, my prayers were answered and the bridge was secured. Then, moving quickly through to the far side of the village after the bridge was secured, the 2nd and 3rd Platoons set up perimeter defensive positions as the remainder of Company L moved into Jägersgrün to await further orders.

During this action we captured approximately 25 to 30 German soldiers, including a German Colonel, and what I thought to be several female soldiers who were hiding with him in one of the houses in the village. I was told later the females actually were part of a German entertainment group similar to our USO troupes. The colonel, who spoke fairly good English, apparently had changed into civilian clothing as we were moving into Jägersgrün, because I found his uniform hidden under a bed. After I told him he could be shot on the spot as a spy for masquerading as a civilian, he claimed to be a staff officer assigned to a division headquarters, the command post (CP) of which he said was located 4 or 5 miles deeper inside Czechoslovakia. He told me he believed his division commander was convinced time was running out for the German forces and would prefer to surrender to the Americans rather than to the Russians, who he had heard were nearing Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia. I suggested to the colonel that he contact his division commander and advise him that the members of his division certainly would be far better off if he surrendered to the Americans, rather than be captured and imprisoned by the Russians. The colonel said he had no radio or wire contact with the Division Commander and asked if I would be willing, under a flag of truce, to accompany him through the German lines to locate a German front line unit, which was in contact with division headquarters.

I then made two very stupid mistakes. First, after having survived five campaigns⁸, and foolishly believing by then that "the Germans didn't have a bullet with my name on it"⁹, I agreed to go with the Colonel. Second, I did not personally inform Capt. Kidd of my intentions and obtain his permission to venture behind enemy lines. I told S/Sgt Howard L. Crawford¹⁰ and Eldridge "Frenchy" LeBlanc (my platoon messenger) what I hoped to accomplish, and to inform Capt. Kidd if I was not back in an hour or two. I then hung part of a white sheet over the front of my jeep. Placing the colonel in the front seat, I sat behind him (with my pistol stuck between his shoulder blades) and instructed Jones, my driver, to follow the Colonel's directions.

⁸ Including the D-Day assault on Omaha Beach, before joining the 347th Infantry Regiment as a replacement during the Battle of the Bulge.

⁹ Many other combat infantrymen believed likewise. At the age of 20 or 21, we were still neither old enough nor smart enough to be continually cautious and fearful.

¹⁰ Crawford became acting platoon Sgt after I became acting platoon leader in early February.

What transpired then, and for the next six or seven hours, was like watching one of the prewar "slap stick" movies. Moving slowly southeast of Jägersgrün on a forest road leading towards Carlsfeld (located about 6 miles east of Jägersgrün and close to the Czechoslovakia border), we luckily passed without trouble through the first German outposts. The Wehrmacht soldiers, with their weapons ready, eyed us like visitors from outer space. Although the German Army units had been steadily retreating as we pushed them eastward towards Czechoslovakia, I do not recall observing any confusion in their ranks as we drove deeper behind the German lines. The German units that we observed appeared to be well organized and ready to defend their positions until compelled again to continue their retreat. One clear memory, however, still stands out in my mind. I remember seeing a German soldier walking along, a mile or two further down the road, carrying a huge armload full of bread to a field kitchen that had been set up near the road. Turning around and seeing us as we approached, he dropped the entire load of bread as, wild eyed, he frantically attempted to un-shoulder his rifle. Thankfully, the Colonel screamed something at him in German, which settled him down. A few minutes later we were met by a German officer, who obviously had been alerted of our approach by the first outposts we had encountered.

After a short conversation in German, the Colonel arranged for a German motorcycle escort to precede us to his division's headquarters. I estimated the headquarters to be 3 or 4 miles inside Czechoslovakia near the towns of Prebuz and Rudne, and approximately 12 miles from Jägersgrün. Upon arriving, the Division Commander, whose name I do not recall, was informed by the Colonel that I was there to accept his surrender. The Commander told me, in excellent English, that although he knew there was little hope left for Germany, and as much as he would like to save his troops from further harm, he could not willingly surrender his division unless ordered to do so by his Corps Commander.

I suggested to him that he contact his Corps Commander and advise him that he, too, would be far better off if he surrendered his entire command to the Americans, rather than waiting for his troops to be captured by the Russians. I told him if his Corps Commander wasn't ready to surrender, then I expected him, the Division Commander, to provide safe passage for my driver and me back to Jägersgrün and the American lines, since we had come under a flag of truce. Before agreeing to contact his Corps Commander, the General asked me why the American forces had stopped their advance after having driven the German Army almost into Czechoslovakia. I told him I had no knowledge of why we had stopped, but he could rest assured that we were moving again and this time we wouldn't stop until we were eyeball-to-eyeball with Russians. Apparently that was all that was needed to convince him to contact his commander.

What seemed to me to be an eternity, but was probably less than an hour -- while the Division Commander, the German Colonel, Jones and I sat casually drinking wine on the verandah of a beautiful home which was the division headquarters -- the Division Commander received word that the Corps Commander wanted to see me at his

headquarters.. During our wait I learned that in the German Army a brigade-sized unit was commanded by a "Generalmajor" (major general), a division was commanded by a "Generalleutnant" (lieutenant general), and a corps was commanded by a "General der Infanterie or Panzertruppe, Artillerie,etc." (full general).

So, off we went again -- this time escorted by a number of Wehrmacht motorcycle troopers, sirens wailing, leading the way and traveling even deeper behind enemy lines in Czechoslovakia. Arriving at the Corps Headquarters, which was located in a large building on the outskirts of Karlsbad (now named Karlovy Vara), I was escorted into the Corps Commander's office. Speaking English, he immediately asked what my rank was. I, like all front line American infantrymen, was not wearing any insignia of rank. Combat infantrymen quickly learned that non-commissioned and commissioned officers were "targets of choice" for German snipers. I certainly wasn't about to tell him that his surrender was being demanded by a Technical Sergeant wearing muddy and dirty clothing -- so I told him I was a Captain, commander of an infantry rifle company. He looked me over, commenting that the American Army also must be running out of officer materiel if it, like the German Wehrmacht, was forced to fill its officer ranks with youngsters barely out of high school. Although I had not yet reached my 22nd birthday, I told the General that I was 24 and had been fighting the Wehrmacht since June 6, 1944, having participated in the Normandy invasion on Omaha Beach (the latter part being the truth). He then told me that he had been a German officer for more than 30 years, and would not surrender unless ordered to do so by his higher command.

Fearing that my venture behind the German lines was about to end in failure, I told the Corps Commander what I had earlier said to his division commander -- that my division and the rest of the American Army was moving again and this time we wouldn't stop until we were eyeball-to-eyeball with Russians. Knowing absolutely nothing of the rules of war, the Geneva Convention or anything else having to do with surrender formalities, I told him that if he formally surrendered to the American forces, the Russians would have to honor that formal surrender document. Although I knew only a few German words¹¹, hardly appropriate for the moment, several of his staff officers, appearing anxious to convince him to surrender, apparently offered their opinion (in German) to the General that my statements were correct. The General told me to wait outside his office while he discussed the situation with his staff.

My driver, Jones, and I sat in the hallway just outside of the general's office for what seemed like another eternity, hearing what sounded like a heated debate between the General and his staff. While waiting for the General to make up his mind, Jones and I watched with growing uneasiness while numerous staff personnel and dispatch messengers ran hurriedly up and down the halls, eyeing us warily as they entered or exited their offices. While I understood from the beginning that our venture deep behind

¹¹ e.g. "HändeHoch" (hands up), "Ich shiesse nicht" (I won't shoot), and "waffen weg" (drop your weapon).

enemy lines would not be a "cake walk," I began to realize that the situation in which I had placed Jones and myself was growing more serious with each passing minute, possibly ending with deadly results.

Not knowing what was going on in the General's office, I must admit that for the first time since leaving our lines, I realized that Jones and I might very well be taken outside and shot because of my brazen and foolhardy actions. After what seemed like another eternity, I was called back into the General's office and informed that after weighing the predicament facing the soldiers and officers under his command, he was prepared to surrender his entire Corps, including the division which I had visited earlier -- but would only do so to an American officer of equal rank. I told him that was not possible; that time was running out for him and his troops. The Russians were rapidly moving from the east and would soon overrun and deal harshly with his forces¹². I told the General that I had been sent by my Division Commander (which was not true) to accept his surrender, and if he wasn't ready to do so, then I expected him to provide safe passage for me and my driver back to the American lines.

After thinking this over for several minutes, the General agreed to surrender his entire command to me, but said he would not do so in his headquarters, preferring to surrender in the field among his troops and at a location halfway between his headquarters and my division's command post (CP). I thought this insistence to be rather strange, but gladly agreed, knowing that it would take Jones and me closer to our lines. The General asked me to point out on the large battle map in his office the approximate location of my division's CP.

By this time, it was getting late in the day and I did not want to be behind enemy lines after dark. Neither was I going to give him the location of my Division CP, nor even my Regimental or Battalion CP -- none of which, truthfully, I had any knowledge. Looking at his map, I found Jägersgrün, which I quickly estimated to be at least 25 miles or more from our present location. Pointing to a road junction near Carlsfeld just inside the German-Czechoslovakia border, I told the General that I believed that particular junction was approximately halfway between his headquarters and my Division's CP. I simply wanted us to be close to the American front lines when we finally departed company with the General and his entourage. The General then ordered several of his senior staff officers to accompany him. Jones and I, along with the Colonel I had captured earlier in Jägersgrün, following in my jeep -- which was sandwiched between the General's staff car and several other German staff cars -- with even more Wehrmacht motorcycles, sirens wailing, leading the way, we headed for the road junction which I had selected.

Arriving at the junction, we found what looked like a small hotel or beer hall, the proprietor of which was hiding with his family in the cellar. The General asked for some paper on

¹² In fact, I had no idea if the Russians were even within 100 miles of his Corps.

which to write his surrender, but none of his staff apparently had brought any. He then told the proprietor to bring him some paper, and was informed by the poor fellow, who was shaking and scared nearly out of his wits, that all he had was some ledger sheets used to record his hotel transactions. As I remember it, the documents -- one in German and one in English -- were then written on several sheets of cheap and poor quality ledger paper. Both recorded, at my insistence, the unconditional surrender of what turned out to be more than 40,000 Wehrmacht troops, including what I thought at the time was a Lieutenant General, several Major Generals and a number of Brigadier Generals. I learned later, after researching the National Archive records, that this surrender action included at least twenty German generals, whose name and rank are listed below.

After receiving my copy of the surrender document, I (recalling a scene from a movie I had seen before the war) asked the General for a token of his surrender. Without hesitating, he gave me his personal pistol -- a small automatic. I then requested that the German Colonel I had captured in Jägersgrün be allowed to accompany me back to my lines, and that a motorcycle escort lead the way. That request was granted and, with considerable relief, we headed straight for our lines. Needless to say, the German officer later thanked me for including him in my request -- grateful to be a prisoner of war and safe in American hands.

Upon reaching Jägersgrün, Jones and I estimated we had driven at least forty-five miles behind the German lines. When I informed Capt. Kidd, my Company Commander, where we had been, and handed him the surrender document, he said words to the effect that I was one crazy fool, adding -- with a wide grin -- that he didn't know whether to court martial me or recommend me for another medal. Capt. Kidd immediately sent the document to Major Withers, our Battalion Commander who, I assume, sent it immediately to Division Headquarters. I learned shortly afterward that while Company L had captured Jägersgrün, Company I had driven the Germans out of Tannenbergesthal and the 1st Battalion was in the process of capturing Klingenthal, during which it and its accompanying Tank Destroyers killed and wounded a number of enemy troops.

During our travel behind enemy lines, we observed a number of heavily camouflaged strong points, including a number of tanks which were located at strategic positions offering good "fields of fire" along the densely wooded and narrow roads. We also saw a number of artillery pieces, some located at bends in the roads with their tubes depressed so that they could fire at anything coming towards them. Many trees immediately adjacent to the roads that passed through heavily forested areas had been rigged with demolitions, to permit them to be blown down across the roads to help impede our advance. Had the German Corps Commander decided not to surrender, these defensive measures undoubtedly would have resulted in significant American and German casualties. These sightings were duly reported to Capt. Kidd upon our return.

❖ An Unforgettable Procession

Later that night the 3rd Battalion received orders to continue our advance early the next morning, May 7th, towards the Czech border. Shortly before we were ready the next morning to “jump off” again, Capt. Kidd called all of his platoon leaders together and informed us that he had just received instructions that our battalion was to remain in our present positions, wait for further orders, and accept the surrender of any German soldiers who approached our positions. He cautioned us to inform everyone not to take any unnecessary chances and to be extremely careful in allowing anyone, particularly any German Schutzstaffel (SS) troops, into our lines -- reminding us of earlier incidents in which SS elements were known to have killed a number of Wehrmacht (German Regular Army) troops who were attempting to surrender to the American forces. Capt. Kidd reminded us that while this change in plans likely was the result of the unconditional surrender of the German troops which I had arranged for the previous day, May 6, he also said greater news might possibly be forthcoming and it would be tragic for anyone, having survived the horrors of war thus far, to now suffer unnecessary injury or lose his life if final victory was almost in our grasp.

We didn't have to wait long, less than an hour or so on May 7, before small groups of German troops began to approach our lines carrying white flags indicating that they were ready to surrender. We heard rumors that the same thing was happening in other areas. These reports were confirmed, during my visit to the National Archives, when I viewed the daily summary reports, weekly periodic reports, journals & files, plus other records of the 347th Infantry Regiment, its 3rd Battalion and the 87th Division. These documents stated that a number of Germans, including six officers -- at least one whom was a General -- had surrendered to our 1st Battalion at 1050 hours on May 7 while the 346th Infantry Regiment had arranged with a German Colonel, also on May 7, to move his command through the 346th lines the morning of May 8th.

Later on May 7th, after more German troops had entered our lines before sundown, Capt. Kidd called his platoon leaders together and gave us the news that we and our allies had been had been praying for these many past weeks, months, and years. We were

informed -- based on a message that Col. Tupper, the Regimental Commander the 347th, had received earlier that day from Major General Culin, our Division Commander -- that the war in Europe was finally over! The delay, we were told, was because our higher headquarters had been instructed not to use any radios to disseminate the surrender information to its lower echelons.

This delay was confirmed by a note I found in the National Archives (see verbatim copy thereof, below), coupled with statements made¹³ by Col. John F.T. Murray. Col. Murray, who served as G-2, Headquarters, 87th Infantry Division, wrote

"When we received the message in the late afternoon of May 7 we were told to get word to the troops that there would be no further offensive action after midnight. But, we were also instructed that we could not use radio to disseminate this information."

He further stated that the 347th Regimental Combat Team was close to the Czechoslovakia border, about 20 miles from the 87th Infantry Division Headquarters, so General Culin sent him "to notify Col. Tupper and his command that the war was over."

Col. Murray added that although he and his driver spotted and were able to avoid several well-armed German soldiers while en route to the 347th Infantry Regiment's CP, he succeeded in delivering the news to Col. Tupper.

Naturally, everyone was overjoyed by the news since we had been given to understand that the Germans, particularly the SS units and other diehard Wehrmacht elements, were planning to retreat into Czechoslovakia and into the mountains of Bavaria where they would continue to fight as "Werewolf" units. The "Werewolf" rumor was later confirmed, in documentation captured from German forces, to be far more than rumor. It was based on plans approved at higher German command levels.

After giving us the news that the war was finally over, Capt. Kidd again told us to be careful, and not to let our guard down. I later learned at the National Archives, that his words of caution proved to be sound advice. Sadly, the Archive records disclosed that a member of our regiment was shot and killed on May 11 by a group of German stragglers whom he had been told to stop from entering our lines, until it could be established that they were not members of a werewolf unit. Apparently, that is what they were. I also found at the Archives an extremely important document in the files of the 347th Infantry Regiment that firmly fixes the date on which we first learned the war in Europe finally was coming to its end. The document, dated May 7 1945, reads as follows:

"Conference call from Half Year 6 in which he gives the following message from Monarch: Representatives of the German High Command have signed an

¹³ *The Golden Acorn News*, December 2001 issue, pp. 9 - 15.

Unconditional Surrender of all German Land, Sea and Air Forces to the AEF and simultaneously to the Soviet High Command at 0141B, 7 May 1945 under which all forces will cease active operations at 0001B, 9 May. Effective immediately all offensive operations will cease. Troops will remain in present positions. Moves involved in occupation duties will continue. Due to difficulty in communications there may be some delay in orders reaching enemy troops, so full defensive precautions will be taken. No release to the press pending official announcement to the press by the heads of the three major powers. End of Monarch message Half Year 6 directs that above be passed to troops carefully so that satisfaction that comes to us is not spoiled by thoughtless acts."

We learned several days later that the German forces which surrendered to us were under the impression (based on a report they had heard on Radio Prague) that suspension of hostilities would not occur until the night of May 8/9. This was at least 30 hours **after** the 347th Infantry Regiment had been ordered to cease ALL offensive operations and more than two full days after Jones and I had traveled behind enemy lines, hoping to obtain the surrender of the German forces in our sector. I will always believe that our foolish and risky venture helped in some small way to convince the German troops who were opposing the 87th Infantry Division, to speed up their suspension of hostilities.

According to documents at the Archives, very early on the morning of May 8th, a large number of Germans -- estimated to be more than 300 troops, including several Generals traveling in at least 70 motorized and tracked vehicles plus horse drawn wagons -- arrived at outposts manned by the 3rd Battalion, 347th Regiment, making it clear that they wanted to surrender. By noon on May 8, another 80 to 90 vehicles, some pulling artillery pieces and loaded with a large number of German troops accompanied by family members, and other males dressed in civilian clothes, entered the 3rd Battalion's lines and surrendered.

The 2nd Battalion reported that a small number of Germans, including three tanks, one towing a staff car, had surrendered to it. Several hours later, as I recall, Major Withers, Capt. Kidd, Lew Goad¹⁴ and I, along with other members of Company L, stood on the outskirts of Jägersgrün and watched as the commander of the German 204th



Surrendering German troop
convoy entering Jägersgrün

¹⁴ Goad had been promoted from Tech/SGT to 2nd Lt. shortly before we entered Plauen.

Panzer Grenadier Regiment surrendered his troops consisting of 420 officers and men, accompanied by 15 SS troops, to the 3rd Battalion. By 1600 hours, yet another 200 officers and men, including at least 80 vehicles belonging to elements of the 2nd Panzer Division, crossed the 3rd Battalion lines. Following immediately behind that group were elements of the Hermann Goering Division, consisting of 500 or more officers and men traveling in at least 150 vehicles.

At 1635 hours, the 1st Battalion, 347th Infantry reported that while capturing its objectives, it had discovered a German military hospital in Klingenthal containing 640 injured German troops, and close by, in the village of Sachsenberg, another hospital holding 43 injured German troops. The 1st Battalion, 347th Infantry also reported that a number of German troops, including an unknown number of tanks belonging to elements of the Gross Deutschland Armored Division, were observed approaching its lines. Later, in the evening of May 8, the 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry, reported that elements of the German 405th Infantry Division, consisting of 43 officers; 100 non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and 540 enlisted men, had surrendered to it. During the same time period the 1st Battalion, 347th Infantry reported it had accepted the surrender of 5 more German officers and 25 enlisted men while the 2nd Battalion, 347th Infantry reported the surrender to it of 20 German troops, including 4 Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth).

Prior to midnight, May 8 -- and before the cessation of active operations by the Allied Forces were ordered to begin at 0001B, 9 May -- at least 4,000 German soldiers were being held by the 3rd Battalion, 347th Infantry while the 1st and 2nd Battalions also were holding large numbers of German troops. Capt. Kidd, not wanting to set up his command post in a German home, ordered a couple of local carpenters to build a suitable structure opposite the POW enclosure on the outskirts of Jagersgrun. Wasting no time the carpenters erected a shed-like building with its' roof extending over a front porch. A couple of liberated chairs were placed on the porch so that Capt. Kidd, Lt. Vallorani and others could watch the growing number of POWs coming in to the enclosures.



Capt. Kidd & Lt. Vallorani standing on the porch of their Command Post in Jägersgrün



A German General discussing
surrender with his troops



German troops moving into POW camp controlled
by 3rd Bn., 347th Infantry Regiment

Early on the morning of May 9, the escalating parade of surrendering German units continued, including a number of general officers and their staffs. Among these were General der Artillerie (General) Herbert Osterkamp, CG, 12th Military District and his staff; Generalmajor Oscar Doepping, CG of Chemnitz and the Gross Chemnitz Division; Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) August Wellm, CG, Koruck 534, General der Flieger (Aviators) Erich Petersen, who was reported to be the CG, 90th Corps; and Generalleutnant Baron (Freiherr) Siegmund von Schacky auf Schoenfeld, CG 413th Infantry Division.

I recall standing on the outskirts of Jägersgrün along with Major Withers, Capt. Kidd, Lt. Vallorani, Lt. Lew Goad and other members of Company L and watching, this time with considerable pleasure, as Major General Culin, our Division Commander, formally accepted the surrender of at least one high-ranking German general. I believe that officer was Generalleutnant Baron (Freiherr) Siegmund von Schacky auf Schoenfeld, who requested permission from General Culin to allow him to move his troops, approximately 5000 men of the 413th Infanterie Division and their equipment, immediately through our lines to their homes near Hof, Bavaria. This request was promptly denied and the general, his staff and troops were placed along with the other German generals in one of the three POW camps which had been set up by Major Wither's 3rd Battalion¹⁵. We continued to watch as an unbroken convoy of the surrendering German troops passed for hour after hour through Jägersgrün on the road leading in from Tannenbergstahl, a small German village located about a mile south of Jägersgrün.

¹⁵ see letter below, dated May 13, 1945, written by Generalmajor Erich Eisenbach, CG, Field Command Post 641 which was addressed to Major Withers.

Later during the afternoon of May 9, Major Withers informed Col. Tupper¹⁶ that the 3rd Battalion had more POWs, nearly 7500, than it could properly handle and requested assistance as soon as possible. Col. Tupper directed the 2nd Battalion to send a guide to Capt. Kidd's company to lead the excess POWs, consisting of more than 25 officers and 650 men, to the 2nd Battalion's POW enclosure. In an After Action Report filed on May 9 by the 347th Infantry Regiment, it was noted that Company G sent a reinforced platoon to the 3rd Battalion to screen

and receive approximately 500 POWs and vehicles. During the day the 347th Infantry received an ever-increasing flow of German troops, accompanied by wives, children, mistresses, and numerous other individuals dressed in civilian clothes intent on surrendering rather than being captured by the Russians. We assumed that these "civilians" likely included a number of Gestapo and Nazi Party officials who would be soon ferreted out by our interrogators. At 2320 hours, May 9, the 2nd Battalion reported holding approximately 1400 POWs in its enclosure. By 2400 hours most, if not all, of the temporary POW enclosures which had been established in the 347th Infantry Regiment's area were overflowing. Three of these in were in the 3rd Battalion area.



German civilians, believed to be Gestapo and Nazi Party officials, accompanying Germans troops entering Jägersgrün



More German troops entering the POW camp

On May 10, Generalmajor Erich Eisenbach, CG, Field Command Post 641, together with the troops under his command crossed the 3rd Battalion lines. As noted earlier, Major Withers placed Eisenbach in overall command of three of the POW camps that had been established by the 3rd Battalion in the area of Tannenbergsthal, Jägersgrün and Rautenkranz. In placing Eisenbach in command of the camps -- subordinate, of course to Major Withers -- Eisenbach was told

that he would be held responsible for assuring law, order and discipline throughout

¹⁶ CO, 347th Infantry Regiment.

those camps¹⁷.

Several days later in connection with the above, Generalmajor Eisenbach addressed an interesting letter, dated May 13, 1945 to Major Withers advising him, in summary, that:



One of numerous German tanks that surrendered to the 3rd Bn, 347th Regiment

Generalmajor Wellm, CG Koruck (AOK 7), left Carlsfeld, Germany o/a 0600 hrs, May 9 to cross the American lines. Also on May 9th, Generalmajor Erich Eisenbach, CG, Field Command Post 641, his troops marched from Platten (Horni Blatna), Czechoslovakia and arrived in Carlsfeld 30 minutes later. Eisenbach, upon his arrival in Carlsfeld, was told by one of Wellm's officers that Wellm had issued discharge papers to every German soldier in his command, believing that the Americans would release the surrendering Germans to their respective hometowns. Eisenbach stated that he had done the same for his troops, and also had appropriate entries made in their paybooks.

Eisenbach went on to state that when he crossed the American lines on **May 10**, Major Withers put him in charge of three POW camps located in the vicinity of Tannenbergstahl and Rautenkrantz, both adjacent to Jägersgrün. He further stated that Major Withers told him that it would be his responsibility to assure law, order and discipline of the POWs located in those camps. Eisenbach also stated that Withers informed him that he, Eisenbach, would carry out his responsibilities as provided by the German Military Code of Justice as well as German disciplinary penalty provisions -- and if became necessary to imprison any POW who required such punishment, then such violator would be turned over to the Americans for imprisonment.

Eisenbach also said that a number of POWs, apparently believing that they had been discharged from further service in the German Army, were refusing to obey orders issued by him and the German officers in their camps. He said he directed the German camp commanders to immediately call in all discharge papers and cancel the entries made in the soldiers' paybooks. Eisenbach advised Major Withers that his orders were

¹⁷ As noted earlier, Major Withers placed Eisenbach in command of all POW camps simply because "he was about my size so I made him the Commandant of all their people."

not executed uniformly. He stated that in Camp #1, all discharge papers were declared invalid but were left with the POWs -- but the discharge entries in their paybooks were canceled. In two other camps (# 2 & # 3) the discharge certificates were called in and submitted to Major Withers while some certificates (in Camp # 3) were destroyed. Eisenbach also advised that in some units, particularly the "Gross-Deutschland" regiment, no discharge papers had been issued. Eisenbach closed his letter stating that the above measures were taken purely for disciplinary reasons.

On May 11 we learned that a soldier of another Battalion of the 347th Infantry Regiment, who was manning a roadblock set up to prevent further Germans from entering our lines, had been shot and killed by several men dressed in civilian clothing, possibly so-called "werewolves", whom he attempted to stop from entering our lines. In reviewing the 347th Regiment's journals and files in the National Archives, I noted that another American soldier who was guarding German prisoners in POW Camp #2 was reported killed by a sniper, apparently a "werewolf", hiding in nearby woods.



Captured German Wehrmacht vehicles

The records also stated that our higher headquarters then issued orders to allow no more German troops to enter our lines. We were instructed to tell them to surrender to the Russians, which, obviously they refused to do. Thousands more German troops and civilians were waiting outside our lines pleading to come in. The records reveal that Major Withers reported that the waiting troops and fleeing civilians apparently had run out of food. He requested permission to at least be permitted to feed them. It appears that request was granted.

Sometime later on May 12, I took time out to write a letter to my father. to let him know that I was OK. I tried to describe some of the unbelievable events that had taken place in the past few days. I wrote:

"Now when you shoot a Kraut, they call it murder, which goes to show just how nonsensical war really is. Just by signing a little piece of paper, men can change the lives and destiny of millions of people -- and those of us who yesterday had the sole purpose of killing other men can now laugh, joke, smoke and give food and shelter to those same people."



Captured German vehicles waiting for shipment to rear-area collecting points



One of the three POW enclosures

I briefly mentioned that "your son had two complete German Infantry Divisions surrender to him (one of which I later discovered was a Corps size command) as well as a number of other assorted enemy organizations." I noted that "by the time we had gotten back (to our lines) my jeep driver and I had been forty-five miles inside the German lines and had experienced one hell of a time. Our "brass" said they didn't know whether to courts martial me or to commend us." Not wanting to alarm my Dad, I added "I guess it won't be the "CM" 'cause I understand we'd been recommended for something. Well, it means more points if it comes through."

I then mentioned that "I had been recommended several months earlier for a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant and, while that's well and good, I understand that officers don't count in the point system". I noted (having already earned more than 85 points) that "as an enlisted man I probably stand a good chance of staying away from the CBI (Pacific theater) with prospects for a discharge upon our return to the States." Although I knew what my Dad or any other father would advise in response, I asked for his advice concerning acceptance or rejection of the commission, saying "I've just about made up my mind, but I'll wait to hear what you think. So write soon."

Shortly after writing the above letter to my father, I was told to report to Division Headquarters where, having been awarded a battlefield commission, I was promoted from Tech Sgt to 2nd Lt. by Brigadier General John L. McKee, our Assistant Division Commander. I was later informed that Jones and I actually had been recommended by Capt. Kidd for another decoration. If so, then we're still waiting for it.

Suffice it to say, I would have been more than happy to settle for a notarized copy of that surrender document -- signed by the German general (whose name I've also forgotten) and "Captain" Thomas L. Stafford, United States Army. More important than receiving another medal or even a copy of the surrender document, is the fact that our risky adventure behind the German lines apparently convinced the enemy forces

opposing us to surrender more than forty eight hours prior to the night of May 8/9, the time at which the Germans believed suspension of hostilities would actually occur. I have often wondered, during the years since then, what might have happened to Jones and me had that German general discovered, before he surrendered his entire command, that he was not dealing with an officer, but had surrendered to an enlisted infantryman. Would he have done so anyway or, would he have ordered me shot for my brazenness and impudence in believing that one of Hitler's Generals would even consider surrendering -- particularly to anyone of lesser rank?

Between May 13 and May 14, approximately 4,000 more German troops had gathered outside of the 3rd Battalion's lines pleading to be allowed entry while another 3800 had assembled outside of the 2nd Battalion's lines and also were appealing for entry. I learned, several years after the war ended, that the Russians insisted that the American and British forces cease accepting those German troops who had not entered our lines, and that we turn over to them any German soldier we were holding who had fought on Russian soil, particularly any "SS" troops. While I have no knowledge that such demands were met, I assume that many of those German soldiers who remained outside our lines on or after May 14, were forced to surrender to the Russians. If so, then I deeply regret that the statement I made to the German Corps Commander, i.e., "that if he formally surrendered his command to the American forces, the Russians would have to honor that formal surrender document", may not have been honored, and particularly so if any of his men were forced to surrender to the Russians. I also learned several years ago that of the three million German soldiers captured by the Russians during the war, only two million survived to return to Germany long afterwards -- many after twenty or more years of hard labor in Russian prisons.

The Archives reveal that on May 15 the 347th Infantry Regiment received orders to evacuate all POWs to other POW camps located in the rear of the 87th Division's sector. This was accomplished in the next two days. On May 22, orders were received to issue German currency (Reichmarks) to the POWs who were to be paroled to their homes. The records state that each officer was issued 80 Reichmarks and each enlisted person was given 40 Reichmarks. Based on my research of the National Archives files pertaining to the 87th Infantry Division, listed below are the names of those German generals who surrendered to the 347th Infantry Regiment, including the units they commanded, or were with at the time of surrender:

1. General der Panzertruppe (General) Walter Krueger - Commanding General (CG), Wkr IV (Wehrkreis/ Home Command/German military district)- Hqs, Dresden; responsible for Saxony, part of Thuringia & Northern Bohemia; he was reported to be one of Germany's more famous corps commanders and, during the Battle of the Bulge, led the German assault on Bastogne, Belgium

2. General der Artillerie (General) Herbert Osterkamp - CG, 12th Military District (surrendered with 404 zbV; 347th Inf. Div; 413 zbV; Gross-Deutschland Panzer. Div.) Came in with 9,500 troops. Note: we in the American 347th Infantry Regiment found it extremely rewarding that the German 347th Infantry Division had surrendered to us.
3. General der Flieger(Aviators) (General) Erich Petersen -- CG, 90th Korps (Corps).
4. Generalleutnant (Lt. Gen.) Baron (Frhr.) Siegmund von Schacky auf Schoenfeld - CG, 413 Infanterie Div came in with 5000 troops. (Schacky requested permission from Gen. Culin, CG, US 87th Inf. Div. who denied his request to move his troops to Bavaria via Hof) - (see # 20, below)
5. Generalleutnant (Lt. Gen.) Josef Schroetter - CG, 404 Infanterie Division (zbV - zur besonderen Verwendung/ for special Employments) - came in with 1,650 troops.
6. Generalleutnant (Lt. Gen.) Wolf Trierenberg - CG, 347th Infanterie Division (surrendered May 10, '45 - came in 200 officers/460 NCOs/1318 EM: (total 1,978 troops).
7. Generalleutnant (Lt. Gen.) Hellmuth von der Chevallerie - CG, West Sudetenland who was accompanied by elements of the 204th Panzer Grenadier Regt., 22nd Panzer Div. ("Das Reich"?)
8. Commander's name unknown - A regimental-size unit of the Gross-Deutschland Wehrmacht Division (Note: this division had the reputation of being one of the most formidable fighting divisions in Hitler's Army).
9. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Harry von Webern- CG, Feldzeugkommando IV (Ordnance Hq)
10. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) August Wellm - CG, Koruck 534
11. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) August Kessler - AOK 7 (Armee Oberkommando/Army Headquarters)
12. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Mueller - OKH (Oberkommando des Heeres/ High Command of Army) Fuehrer Reserve
13. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Adolf Wolf - CG, 13 Flak Div.
14. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Nigel (Nagel?)
15. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Inspektor (engineer?) Meyer - ("Otto" may have been his

first name)

16. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Oscar Doepping - Cmdr. of Chemnitz and CG of Gross Chemnitz Division (90th Korps ?)
17. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Niden - CG, Replacement Units of WKR IV (Wehrkreis/ Home Command/German military district)
18. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Kern - Administrative Officer of WKR IV (Wehrkreis/ Home Command/German military district)
19. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Erich Eisenbach - CG, Feldkommandantur 641/Field Command Post 641
20. Generalmajor (Maj. Gen.) Hellmuth Hiepe -- He surrendered with and may have been Deputy CG of 413th Infantry Division. Col. Tupper, C.O., 347th Inf. Regt. accepted Generalmajor Hiepe's formal surrender

On May 25, one of our patrols captured a group of SS troops posing as German foresters who, after interrogation, were determined to be part of a "Werewolf" cadre. They were quickly placed under close control along with other captured SS prisoners who were kept separated from the Wehrmacht prisoners. Several weeks before that event occurred, activities in the 3rd Battalion's sector had settled into a more normal routine as recalled below by Ray Miles, Mac McAuliffe and Lew Goad:

Ray Miles noted that after Company I, 347th Infantry had taken over Tannenbergstahl on May 6 against light resistance, it also -- along with other elements of the 3rd Battalion -- became involved to a great degree in the control of the POW camps, including all the excitement it generated. Ray recalled that after the German prisoners were moved out, Company I really enjoyed its stay in Tannenbergsthal -- a lovely little village which had been spared from the effects of war. He remembers that he and his men pitched their tents in a grassy area along side a pretty stream in the heart of Tannenbergsthal. Company I wasted no time in using the stream's cool water to chill some German beer which had been acquired for "rest and relaxation" purposes, of course. Ray and his men contacted some women in Tannenbergsthal and had them make a large American Flag. Company I then erected a flag pole among their tents and flew "Old Glory" at "half-staff" for a while in memory of President Franklin D. Roosevelt who had died several weeks earlier on April 12, 1945, the day before our attack on Plauen, Germany.

Mac McAuliffe recalls that on or about May 8 or 9 Company M, 347th Infantry, which was located near Jägersgrün and Tannenbergsthal, also had pitched their tents on a hillside nearby. Mac remembers that he and several other members of Company M decided to go for a swim in a pond on the other side of the hill. Arriving at the pond, they were surprised

to hear a number of German soldiers singing "Lillie Marlene" ... that great song of the war equally loved by American as well as German soldiers ... while bathing and washing up on other side of the pond. Mac stated "I cut the legs off my 'long johns' that I was still wearing and used my 'johns' for trunks. We then dove into the pond and thrashed about reveling in the warmth of the spring day. The German soldiers, who were bathing approximately 20 yards away on the other side of the pond, paid no attention to us and WE paid no attention to them ... the weather was great. The water was fine and refreshing and, best of all, the war was over ... for both the Germans and ourselves ... a long time since the frigid and brutal weather we had endured during the Battle of the Bulge back in Belgium and Luxembourg. That night someone got hold of a bottle of cognac ... we passed it around standing around the flame of a small fire ... the first in many a month ... it was one happy day and night!"

Lew Goad reminded me that shortly after several German Panzer (tank) units had entered our lines on May 8, he and I were approached by two young Panzer commanders, both Captains, who were convinced -- even though we repeatedly told them otherwise -- that the American Army would soon decide to join with the German Army to fight the Russians. One of the German officers told us that the Russian tank units had made extremely poor tactical use of the American built Sherman tanks, which our country had shipped by the thousands to the Russians during the war. He said that his tank unit alone destroyed more than 50 of those tanks and could have destroyed more had his unit not run out of ammunition.

Lew also reminded me of the discipline and professionalism initially demonstrated by the surrendering German troops -- who, as soon as they were placed in their designated POW enclosures, wasted no time pitching their tents which they carefully lined up by using communication wire. Afterwards, whenever even a small group of German soldiers moved anywhere within their enclosure, they did so in formation and "in step", counting cadence or singing a "marching song". Capt. Kidd and Lt. Vallorani quickly put a stop to that show of military discipline, ordering that whenever the POW's moved anywhere, they would do so by "route step" and "out of formation". Simply stated, the Germans were directed to walk or straggle from one point to the next. Capt. Kidd told the senior German officers that while he appreciated their desire to maintain discipline and order, he wanted it accomplished in a nonmilitary manner. Suffice it to say, there were no further formations or "marching in step" within the area controlled by Company L.

Lew also remembered that after all of the POWs had been evacuated to the rear of the Division's sector, he and I persuaded Capt. Kidd to permit us to conduct a "beer patrol" into Czechoslovakia. After driving across the border to Nejdek, about 18 miles from Jägersgrün, we finally located a brewery. In view of the fact that the war was now over, we proceeded to surprise the "braumeister" by paying for (instead of "liberating") five or six kegs of excellent Czech beer. We paid for the beer with Reichmarks 'liberated' earlier from a bank in Plauen by Sgt. Loren Brown, who had generously shared some with me.

Needless to say, our Company L buddies unanimously agreed that the Czech beer tasted like the "nectar of the gods". A day or two later, Capt. Kidd, Lew, John Weber, Brian O'Brian (Capt. Kidd's driver) and I took a jeep drive to Karlovy Vara (then called Karlsbad), Czechoslovakia for a quick visit to that world famous "spa" town which Jones and I had visited earlier under more tense circumstances. That lovely town, which was practically untouched by the war, was still decked out with white sheets, etc., hanging from nearly every window while its inhabitants waved at us as we drove slowly through its picturesque streets -- streets which would soon be occupied and placed again under iron-fisted control, this time by the Russians.

Ironically, the thoughts expressed above by the two German Captains also were constantly on the mind of General George S. Patton, Commander of the US Third Army -- to which the 87th Infantry Division belonged until we reached the Czechoslovakian border during the last weeks of the war. On May 18, Patton noted in his diary -- "In my opinion, the American Army as it now exists could beat the Russians with the greatest of ease, because, while the Russians have good infantry, they are lacking in artillery, air, tanks, and in the knowledge of the use of the combined arms, whereas we excel in all three of these. If it should be necessary to fight the Russians, the sooner we do it the better." Patton repeated his concern when he wrote his wife a short while later -- "If we have to fight them, now is the time. From now on we will get weaker and they stronger." Patton's urgent and prophetic advice went unheeded.



Russian DPs loaded on 334th FA Bn. Trucks prior to being moved to the Russian line east of Chemnitz

Prior to visiting the National Archives to confirm the events contained in this article, I received valuable information concerning searching the archives from John Walker, son of Lt. Donald L. Walker who was transferred to B Battery, 334th Field Artillery (FA) Battalion, 87th Infantry Division upon receiving a battlefield commission while serving as a Sergeant and Forward Artillery Observer in A Battery, 334th FA Bn. Based on information provided to John by his father, I was able to confirm that shortly after the war ended, Lt. Walker had been directly involved in transporting Russian displaced persons (DPs) via several



Lt. Donald L. Walker, B Battery, 334th FA Bn., with three Russian soldiers near the Russian DP exchange point

truck convoys from our area to Russian Army lines east of Chemnitz, possibly near Marienberg, Germany. I found a document in the archives which stated that the transfer of DPs -- from our lines to an exchange point operated by the Russian 75th Division in or near Chemnitz -- occurred between May 22 and June 3, 1945. John's father, shortly before his death, told John that initially he was to transport the DPs to a railroad station located not far from Plauen. However, after the first transfers occurred, the Russians insisted that the Americans transport the DPs to a point much further east than had been originally agreed upon. The Russians claimed that many of the DPs, after being placed aboard the trains, were jumping off at the first opportunity and were then walking back to where the American units were located because they did not want to return to Russia.

Several weeks later, on May 28, the 30th US Infantry Division took over the entire sector occupied by the 87th Infantry Division, including the area controlled by the 347th Infantry Regiment. We then moved to an area near Schleiz, Germany where we remained until we received orders to return to the States for a short "rest and recuperation leave" at home, after which we were to report to Fort Benning, Georgia. The rumor was that the 87th Infantry Division would then be shipped to the Pacific Theater to participate in further combat against the Japanese forces.



Members of the 2nd Platoon, Company L, 347th Infantry Regiment at war's end

❖ The Journey Home, Then Onto Japan

We left Schleiz, Germany o/a June 12, 1945, traveling by train, loaded into "40 & 8s" (40 men & 8 horses) railroad boxcars, bound for "Camp Oklahoma", near Rheims, France arriving there o/a June 15. We remained there for about two weeks during which we were allowed to visit Paris before being moved to "Camp Lucky Strike", near Le Havre, France. We arrived at "Camp Lucky Strike" o/a June 29 where we waited a few days before boarding the Navy Transport USS West Point, formerly the SS America, for shipment to the States. After boarding the ship, we received a mimeographed letter signed by Major General Culin, our Division Commande,r containing the news that many of us expected:

"After furloughs, we will meet again at Fort Benning, Ga., to begin a brief but strenuous period of training before we once again sail to foreign lands to aid in the final defeat of our remaining enemies."

Prior to moving to Schleiz, I assembled together the surviving members of my platoon for the purpose of collectively remembering each of our comrades who had become battle casualties -- particularly, those comrades who had died along the way. Still standing tall with me at the war's end were those in the picture above, most whose names I still remember: William Alexander, Ray Bierer, Bodeker, William Carter, Dalton Carraway, Chris Cawley, James Collins, Howard Crawford, Rabun Giles, Ben Goldberg, McDonald Hardison, James Jones, Robert Jones, Eldridge "Frenchy" LeBlanc, Howard Miner, Ray Severance, Tom Sullivan, Lawrence Summers, Tom Suica, Robert Webb, Leroy Weed, James White and (John or Billie) White.

Seeing the Statue of Liberty as we headed into the New York harbor on July 11, 1945, was a sight I'm sure none of us will ever forget. Neither will we forget the tremendous reception we received en route through the harbor and, particularly, when we arrived at the pier. We were then transported to Ft. Dix, NJ for processing, pay, new uniforms, etc. While at Ft. Dix, several of us ventured into New York City to "do the town." All I remember is being told on the ride back to Ft. Dix that I had fallen asleep during the floor show at the "Copacabana", then a world-famous night club, apparently suffering from "battle fatigue -

New York City style." A few days later, those of us who lived south of New Jersey were transported to Ft. Meade Maryland where we received "leave orders" to spend 30 glorious days at home before reporting to Ft. Benning, GA. While at Ft. Meade, Lew Goad, I and several others ran a "recon patrol" to scout out a few bars and night clubs in Washington, DC.

Shortly before our leave was over, two earth-shattering explosions occurred on the Island of Honshu, Japan that ended or changed thousands of lives forever. Those two explosions also saved hundreds of thousands other lives, Japanese and Americans alike, including many of us in the 87th Infantry Division who had just returned to the States before leaving -- as Major General Culin told us a few weeks earlier aboard the "West Point" -- to "once again sail to foreign lands to aid in the final defeat of our remaining enemies." The entire world soon learned that President Harry S. Truman had authorized the first-ever use of the atomic bomb in a final attempt to stop the war, after deciding that the Japanese were determined to continue the fight in spite of intense efforts to persuade them to surrender. On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, an industrial target. Some 80,000 Japanese were killed in that attack, and another 60,000 died of radiation wounds over the next 40 years. Three days later, the military seaport of Nagasaki was similarly destroyed by the second atomic bomb, which finally persuaded the Japanese to surrender.

A recent article written by Colonel Frank Sackton¹⁸, an American infantry officer who served as staff assistant to Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and who had access to records of the Japanese actions leading up to the atomic bombing, including Japanese military and diplomatic messages, makes crystal clear that had use of the atomic bombs not ended the war in the Pacific, the Japanese had planned a defense of their homeland so ferocious in nature that they, the Japanese, were sure the Americans would sue for a peace more suitable to the Japanese to persuade them to stop the killing.

Colonel Sackton noted that on June 18, 1945 (while the 87th Infantry Division was getting ready to return to the States), President Truman met with his senior staff and advisers for the purpose of determining the estimate of casualties expected in the military assault on Japan, and to discuss options to preclude the attack. General of the Army George C. Marshall, the "five star" general who was the US Army Chief of Staff during World War II, put the casualty estimate for the first 30 days at 31,000 (dead and wounded). He also reported that General MacArthur's estimate for the same period was 50,800. But the figures that appalled President Truman were those for the total operation of about six months. General Marshall estimated that during that period there would be at least 193,500 American casualties, including 40,000 dead. Admiral William D. Leahy, Truman's military aide, estimated the total casualties at 270,000. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson projected the losses at about 1 million.

¹⁸ [The Arizona Republic, July 27, 2003](#)

When President Truman -- who had been informed several weeks earlier that the U.S. had developed an atomic bomb capability deemed ready for use -- was made aware of the various casualty estimates, he considered numerous alternatives to terminate the war without the use of atomic weapons or the U.S. planned invasion of the Japanese homeland. The high casualty estimates had a certain validity for the President because he recalled the murderous Okinawa campaign, a relatively small one that cost the Americans 12,000 killed and 36,000 wounded. He also took into consideration the new weapon that the Japanese had been using with devastating effect -- suicide aircraft known as the "kamikaze".

The toll already inflicted on American ships by 1,900 Kamikaze aircraft had been great: 30 vessels sunk and 368 damaged, including 10 battleships and 13 aircraft carriers. More than 750 American aircraft had been shot down during the Okinawa campaign. The group that had gathered at that meeting knew the fierce defense of Okinawa would pale in comparison to a fanatic defense of the Japanese homeland. One alternative considered was to increase the bombing of Japan with conventional weapons. But this tactic had been tried without success.

Another alternative considered by President Truman was to persuade the Soviets to enter the war against Japan, creating such an impact that the Japanese leaders would see the futility of continuing hostilities. But the Soviets were being coy about helping the Americans. They wanted to be in on the kill to get some of the fruits of victory, but only after the Americans were on the verge of success.

Soviet leader Josef Stalin stalled for time by making unreasonable demands for Soviet participation. He requested that the United States provide the Soviets with even more materiel support, i.e., 860,000 tons of war materiel; 206,000 tons of liquid cargo; 3,000 tanks; 5,000 aircraft; 75,000 vehicles; and other supplies to equip a force of 1.5 million men. Clearly, this was not a viable option.

During the time the United States and the Soviets were negotiating, the Japanese military ruling clique also was negotiating with the Soviets. The Japanese records revealed the Japanese military leaders were attempting to strike a deal with Stalin. The records suggested that the Soviets and the Japanese team up after the war to share the control of the countries in the Western Pacific region. In exchange, the Soviets (a member of the Allied Powers) would arrange a Japanese surrender favorable to the continuance of the Japanese leadership. But Stalin kept stalling in these negotiations as well. The Soviets finally declared war on Japan on Aug. 9 - three days after the Hiroshima bombing and on the same day of the Nagasaki bombing.

Colonel Sackton wrote that other courses of action had been discussed, including the possibility of a negotiated peace instead of the then-existing policy of "unconditional

surrender." But this option was also discarded as unrealistic because the policy developed by all of the Allied Powers applied to Japan the same as it did to Germany. Once President Truman learned of the successful detonation of a test atomic bomb, there was no doubt in his mind that he would, if absolutely necessary, use that weapon in an effort to save American lives. Later, when he received the report that two operational bombs had become available, he directed that they be employed against targets in Japan. He also directed that if the atomic bombs did not bring the war to a close, the attack on the mainland of Japan -- called Operation DOWNFALL, consisting of two components, OLYMPIC and CORONET -- would take place in the Fall and Spring of 1945-46.

Operation OLYMPIC would begin on Nov 1, 1945, after the hurricane season, before winter. General Krueger, 6th Army, with nine divisions (3 more in reserve) was to invade three beaches in southern Kyushu, the southernmost of the four Japanese home islands. This was to become a giant airbase to support the next invasion phase, CORONET, in the spring of 1946. The Japanese had correctly predicted our invasion point and had reinforced Kyushu threefold over initial US expectations.

Operation CORONET, twice the size of OLYMPIC, would begin on March 1, 1946 on Honshu, the main island of Japan and its capitol, Tokyo, with 22 to 28 divisions in the spring, after air fields on Kyushu allowed land-based air support. Operation CORONET would consist of two prongs, one of which would include the 87th Infantry Division

General Hodges, commanding the 1st Army consisting of the 5th, 7th, 27th, 44th, 86th, and 96th Infantry divisions, along with 1st, 4th, and 6th Marine Divisions, would land east of Tokyo, clear the peninsula, establish air fields, land tank divisions, then charge across the plains to take the capital.

Ten days after the initial landing, Lt. Gen Eichelberger, commanding the 8th Army consisting of the 4th, 6th, 8th, 24th, 31st, 32nd, 37th, 38th, and 87th Infantry Divisions, along with the 13th and 20th Armored Divisions, would land south of Tokyo and attack west of Yokohama, Tokyo's seaport, open Tokyo Bay and block any reinforcement of Tokyo.

Following the initial assault, eight more Divisions -- the 2nd, 28th, 35th, 91st, 97th and 104th Infantry Divisions, and the 11th Airborne division -- would be landed. If additional troops were needed, as expected, other Divisions re-deployed from Europe and undergoing training in the United States would be shipped to Japan in what was hoped to be the final push.

Colonel Sackton noted that had the armed assault on Japan taken place, the Americans would have had a far more difficult operation than the planners had predicted. When American troops entered Japan after it surrendered, Colonel Sackton wrote that astonishing discoveries were made. Surprisingly, the secret Japanese files were intact; nothing had been destroyed. The Americans learned that the defending Japanese force

was about 20 percent greater than our forecast.

The Japanese also had determined accurately that the American assault troops would have landed on Miyazaki Beach. Actually, it was one of the few logical landing sites for our forces. There was no doubt that all units in the assault waves would have suffered a great number of casualties on the beach and in the water. We learned also that Japan had closed all of its schools and mobilized the schoolchildren. Nine-year-old boys were armed to fight with the Japanese Army units. The civilian population was formed into national civilian defense units. Japan had been turned into a nation of fortified caves and underground defenses in preparation for the expected invasion. We found that the Japanese still possessed some 8,000 aircraft and had set aside almost 3,000 kamikaze airplanes to attack our ships before they could reach Japan. Also, there was an army of 2 million men in the home islands. It all looked like an American disaster in the making. Fortunately for both the American forces and the Japanese defenders, the atomic bomb attacks on Japan so stunned their rulers, leaving them little choice but to surrender.

It has become easier, certainly 58 years later (in 2004), to forget the trials and tribulations as well as the passions, bitterness and the hatred of the enemy that was built up during the war. There continues to still be some second guessing now, as it was even more so back in the 60s and 70s, whether President Truman should have made the decision to employ the atomic bomb. But at that time, the families of millions of Americans in uniform rightfully feared for the lives of their loved ones.

Perhaps only those who lived in those perilous times, particularly those who served in the 87th Infantry Division and numerous other divisions and units that were scheduled to participate in either component of Operation DOWNFALL, can fully appreciate the courage and wisdom of President Truman's decision -- and be thankful that he did not hesitate or delay in making it. Otherwise, many of us who would have fought in Operation DOWNFALL never would have made it home again.

❖ Appendix

Generalmajor Eisenbach

Tannenbergsthal, den 13.5.45

Bericht über die Zurückziehung der anlässlich der
Übergabe an die amerikanische Armee ausgestellten
Entlassungsscheine.

Der Übertritt der Feldkommandantur 641 über die amerikanische Sperrlinie erfolgte auf Grund der Radio-Meldung des Senders Prag, wonach in der Nacht vom 8./9.5.45 Waffenruhe eintreten sollte.

Die Feldkommandantur 641 marschierte auf Grund dieser Nachricht am 9.5. von Platten (5 km südl. Johannegeorgenstadt) nach Carlsfeld (10 km westl. Johannegeorgenstadt), ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ da sich dort ihre vorgestzte Dienststelle, Korück AOK 7, befand. Sie traf in Carlsfeld am 9.5. vormittags 6.30 Uhr ein und erfuhr von einem zurückgebliebenen Oberleutnant des Korück (Name unbekannt), dass General Welm mit seinem Stabe vor einer halben Stunde abgerückt sei, um die amerikanische Sperrlinie westl. Carlsfeld zu überschreiten.

Der Oblt. gab an, es sei notwendig, jedem Mann einen Entlassungsschein auszuhändigen, da die amerikanischen Dienststellen die Soldaten unmittelbar in die Heimat entlassen würden. Auf meine Frage, wer diese Entlassungsscheine ausstelle, bekam ich die Antwort, dass dieses General Welm für seine Einheit und im übrigen der Ortskommandant von Carlsfeld getan habe. Ich liess daraufhin nach einem vorhandenen Muster Entlassungsscheine für meinen Stab ausstellen und eine entsprechende Eintragung in das Soldbuch vornehmen.

Bei dem Übertritt über die amerikanische Sperrlinie wurde mir am 10.5. durch den amerikanischen Kommandanten Major Withers eröffnet, dass mir die Aufsicht über die im Raume Tannenbergsthal - Rautenkrauz vorhandenen 3 Lager übertragen sei und dass ich dafür zu sorgen habe, dass in diesen Zucht und Ordnung und Disziplin herrsche. Auf meine Frage, welche Machtmittel mir dafür zur Verfügung ständen, liess mir Major Withers durch seinen Dolmetscher sagen, dass nach wie vor das deutsche Militärstrafgesetz und die deutsche Disziplinarstrafordnung Geltung habe. Wenn ich Freiheitsstrafen verhängen sollte, so sollte ich die Bestraften der amerikanischen Dienststelle zur Verbüssung übergeben.

Ich stellte sehr bald fest, dass eine Reihe von Soldaten sich auf ihre Entlassungsscheine beriefen und den von mir und den Lagerkommandanten gegebenen Befehlen nicht mehr gehorchen wollten. Aus diesem Grunde habe ich den Befehl an die 3 Lagerkommandanten gegeben, die Entlassungsscheine sofort einzuziehen und die Eintragung in die Soldbücher zu streichen. Die Streichung sollte mit Unterschrift und Dienststempel bescheinigt werden.

Dieser Befehl ist nicht in allen Lagern gleichmässig durchgeführt worden. In Lager I wurden die Entlassungsscheine für ungültig erklärt, aber den Männern belassen unter gleichzeitiger Streichung der Entlassungsbescheinigung im Soldbuch. In Lager II und III wurden die Scheine eingezogen. Diese Scheine werden anliegend überreicht. Ineinigen Blocks des Lagers III wurden die Scheine als wertlos vernichtet. Die gestrichenen Eintragungen in die Soldbücher liegen aber vor. Einige Truppenteile hatten keine Entlassungsscheine ausgestellt, so unter anderen das Regiment Gross-Deutschland im Lager I.

Die Massnahme wurde rein aus disziplinären Gründen getroffen.

Original report from Generalmajor Erich Eisenbach

Major General Eisenbach

Tannenbergsthal, May 13, 1945

Report Concerning the Cancelling of Discharge Papers
Issued in Connection with the Surrender to the
American Army

The move of the Field Command Post 641 across the American lines took place as a result of a report heard on Radio Prague that suspension of hostilities would occur in the night of May 8/9 '45.

Upon hearing this report, the Field Command Post 641, on May 9, marched from Platten (5 KM South of Johannegeorgenstadt) to Carlsfeld (10 KM West of Johannegeorgenstadt) because that was the location of the next highest command function, Korueck AOK7. It arrived in Carlsfeld on May 9 at 6:30 AM and was informed by a remaining First Lieutenant of Korueck (name unknown) that General Weim and his staff had left half an hour ago to cross the American lines West of Carlsfeld.

The First Lieutenant advised of the necessity to issue discharge papers to every soldier because the American authorities would immediately release the soldiers to their respective home towns. Upon my question who would issue these discharge papers, I was advised that General Weim had done this for his unit and beyond that the town commander of Carlsfeld would have that responsibility. I then ordered discharge papers to be made up for my staff as per an available sample and also made appropriate entries in the paybooks of my soldiers.

When we crossed the American lines, I was told on May 10 by the American commander Major Withers that I was given overall command for the three camps in the area Tannenbergsthal - Rautenkranz and that it would be my responsibility to assure law, order and discipline in these camps. Upon my question as to what measures of authority would be available to me for this purpose, Major Withers informed me through his interpreter that the German Military Code of Justice would continue to apply as well as the German disciplinary penalty provisions. If imprisonment was necessary, I was to transfer the people involved to the American authorities for servicing their sentence.

Very soon, I found out that a number of soldiers, with reference to their discharge papers, refused the orders issued by myself and the individual camp commander. For this reason, I ordered the three camp commanders to immediately call in the discharge papers and to cancel the entries made in the soldiers paybooks. The cancellation was to be made official with their signature and an authorized rubber stamp.

This order was not executed uniformly in every camp. In Camp 1, the discharge papers were declared invalid, but left with the men with simultaneous cancellation of the discharge entries in their paybooks. In Camp 2 and 3, the certificates were called in and are submitted as attachments to this report. In a few blocks of Camps 3 and 4, the certificates were destroyed for having no value. The cancelled entries in the paybooks, however, are available. At a number of units, no discharge papers had been issued; among others this applies to the Regiment Gross-Deutschland in Camp 1.

These measures were taken for purely disciplinary reasons.

TRANSLATION: U. Fahrun
November 21, 1989

English translation of report from Generalmajor Erich Eisenbach

❖ About the Author



THOMAS (Tom) STAFFORD was born in Washington, DC (June 1923) and raised in Petersburg, VA (Colonial Heights) where he lived during all of his early years. Tom was drafted (March 1943) out of college (Virginia Polytechnic Institute) into the Army during World War II.

Assigned to the 6th Combat Engineer Special Assault Brigade upon arrival (January 1944) in England, he was promoted to Corporal and participated in the invasion of France during the early stages of the assault on OMAHA Beach (D-Day, June 6, 1944). He continued serving with the Brigade through the Normandy and Northern France Campaigns. Transferring (December 1944) to Company L, an Infantry Rifle Company in the 347th Infantry Regiment, 87th Infantry Division, he was soon promoted to Platoon Sergeant, Second Rifle Platoon and, after replacing his Platoon Commander (who was wounded) continued to lead the Second Platoon during the Battle of the Bulge; the assault on the Siegfried Line; the assault crossing of the Mosel and Rhine Rivers; the Central European campaign and into Czechoslovakia, where he received a battlefield Commission (2nd Lt.) shortly after the surrender by the German forces on May 8, 1945.

Immediately upon the war's end in Europe, Tom accompanied the 87th Infantry Division upon its return (July 1945) to the States. The Division, having been selected to participate in the invasion of the Japanese Island of Honshu, was preparing to move to California for shipment to Japan when President Truman ordered the use of atomic bombs to persuade the Japanese also to surrender.

Having received five battlefield promotions during combat, (Corporal to 2nd Lt.), Tom decided to remain in the Army after the war finally ended. Selected to serve as Aide-de-camp to General Phillip Gallagher, Commanding General (CG), 25th Infantry Combat Team at Ft. Benning, GA (1946), Tom later accompanied the General to the Philippine Islands where General Gallagher became CG of the 14th Philippine Scout Division. Tom then accompanied Gen. Gallagher back to Germany (1947) as his Aide-de-camp when the General became Deputy CG of the US Constabulary; Director of all US Army

Military Posts in USAREUR and later CG of the Berlin Airlift Command during the "Cold War."

Upon his promotion to Captain, Tom was given (1950) command of a 1st Infantry Division Rifle Company assigned the mission of securing the German-Czechoslovakia border prior to returning to the States (1951). He then served two tours of duty in Korea: first tour, (1953-1954) as Headquarters Company Commander of the 7th Infantry Div. and later as Civil Affairs Officer of the 25th Infantry Div.; second tour, (1960 - 1961) as Budget Officer for the Eighth US Army following his promotion to Major. Between his two tours in Korea, Tom was stationed in Hawaii (1954-1957) with the 25th Infantry Division upon its withdrawal from Korea in 1954.

Returning to the States (1961) after his second tour in Korea, Tom was assigned to the Office of the Comptroller, Military District of Washington. He retired from active military duty (Major) with a medical disability in 1963 but continued to serve as a Dept. of Defense civilian employee (Comptroller, GS-15) until he retired again in 1987, having completed 43 years of Federal service.

During his active military service, Tom received a total of twenty-four decorations and medals, including The Combat Infantry Badge; The Silver Star with one OLC; The Bronze Star with Letter V device and one OLC; The Army Commendation Medal with one OLC; The Presidential Unit Citation (D-Day); The French Croix de Guerre with Palm (D-Day); the French Fourragere(D-Day) plus five campaign stars and D-Day invasion arrowhead. He also was awarded the Army Civilian Meritorious Service Medal.