

HEADQUARTERS CCR
8TH ARMD DIV.
APO 258

SUBJECT: Report covering twelve days as a Nazi Prisoner of War. 4th April - 16th April 1945

About 1830, 4 April 1945, while fighting south from LIPPSTADT, GER., with the mission of reducing the RHUR pocket, I received a report that the head of my right column had entered the town of HORNE. (later I learned that the message was garbled and should have read "entered the woods north of HORNE"). I was now with my left column and proceeded cross country in a 1/4 T in an effort to contact the CO of my right column. About 100 yards from the town 2 MG's and about 15 rifles opened up on our jeep. The location of the MG's and riflemen was not discovered until we were right on top of them. We now realized that we had run into an ambush. There was absolutely no cover available. I told my driver to "step on it and head for town". We dashed right through the entrenched group of krauts, who at this time had ceased firing and were bewildered and amazed. We entered the town but were forced to stop about 20 yards beyond the ambush. The town was in an uproar. Civilians were dashing back and forth across the main street. Kraut soldiers were racing up the street, apparently alerted on hearing the firing. Fifteen riflemen covered us from a distance of about 20 yards. My driver, PFC Robert I. Buss, Menominee Falls, Wisconsin, remarked "Colonel, it looks like we have run into something." We dismounted and surrendered. Why some trigger-happy kraut didn't snap his trigger was our good luck.

We were then taken to Hq 1st Bn. 60th Pz Regt, 116 Pz Div. defending the town. Here we were questioned rather vaguely but not searched. I tried to persuade the CO to surrender before the town was destroyed and lives of civilians and soldiers were lost unnecessarily. This he refused to do.

We were then put in a jeep without windshield, which probably saved our lives later on, and were driven to somewhere near HILBECK which I believe was the rear echelon of the Div. CP 116th Pz Div. There were two guards and the driver with us. This was some ride. It was a very dark rainy night. There were all kinds of horse drawn and motor vehicles, including tanks, on the road going in both directions. Our jeep narrowly missed hitting as well as being hit by vehicles on both sides of the road. The driver didn't know the way and apparently couldn't read a map. Practically at every CR and RJ he had to wake up the farmer and ask directions. While pulling away from one of those stops he ran the jeep headlong into a ditch, throwing me over the hood and our driver and guards on top of me. Unable to get it out the guards had us continue on foot.

Stopped once more at a farmhouse to ask the way. Again we were off arriving at HILBECK about 2345. All this hiking was done over muddy trails a distance of about ten kms. From here we were taken to OSTERBRUNNEN where we appeared before the IPW. Not having been searched up to this time I was able to dispose of two code documents and a few lesser important papers while riding in the jeep.

Two interpreters were on hand to question us. Very few questions were asked regarding our military operations. The interpreters confined their line of talk to their personal affairs, their families, their homes and what was going to happen to them at the end of the war. They wanted to know why US, England, and Germany were fighting. They said their reason for fighting was to expand to the east and relieve the German minorities there and above all to fight bolshevism. They repeated several times that the US, England and Germany would have to fight Russia after this war. They also blamed the war on the US for pulling out of Germany too soon after the last war leaving England and France a free hand.

We were not searched but were requested to take everything out of our pockets and place it on a table. We were told we would be searched when we reached the PW camp. This was not done however. Everything was returned to me except my flashlight, lighter, matches and compass. I recovered my lighter a few days later when I saw one of the interpreters using it. He said that he got it from a Canadian soldier. However I convinced him it had my initials on it. They allowed me to retain a good sized pocket knife.

We were then shown to our sleeping place about 0130, 5 April. This was in a barn where a makeshift cell was provided. I soon learned that we were being guarded by the PW Guard Squad which was a part of the Intelligence Section of Division Headquarters. On guard also was a German police dog. This dog was four years old three of which were spent in the army. He was vicious and would obey only one member of the guard.

An interpreter, Dr. Eric M. Coche was also detailed with us. This man was born in Cleve, HOLLAND, and married a Russian and lived in Posen. His wife was the widow of a Colonel in the Czar's guards. The Colonel escaped from the bolshevists but later returned to Russia to look for his family. He was captured and shot. Now this interpreter didn't know where his family was and was worried since the Russians had occupied POSEN. He talked about his family whenever he got the opportunity. He said he believed in Socialism at first and thought it was a good thing and only wanted to be a good German. This was his reason for being a German soldier. Now he realized he was wrong and wanted the war finished quickly. Many times he wanted to escape with us, but he was afraid of his fate if caught. He was well educated and had traveled over most of the world. He operated the "HOLLAND TOURS INC" prior to the war. He had offices in all principal cities in Europe and several in the US. He often spoke of his experiences when he was personal guide to Mrs. Hoover, Ex-President's wife, when she made a tour of Europe. It was easily determined that he was another Hollander who bet on the wrong horse.

Already in captivity were a Major Richard Ludeman, IOWA, 2nd Armd Div, Pvt. Robert W. Sberick of Boil City, Pennsylvania, 80th Tk Bn, 8th Armd Div, and Pvt Fletcher, 1st Inf Div. These were here from 2 to 7 days waiting to be taken to a PW camp. Our air and knocked out bridges prevented this. Turned in on a bed of straw.

Next morning had ersatz coffee and black bread for breakfast. At about 0930 started for PW camp in a 2-1/2 T truck (captured during the bulge). Truck was forced to seek cover in barns several times from our air.

We reached HUNNIGEN eventually. Rear echelon Div had moved here during the early morning. We were about to stay here when ordered to proceed to PW camp at HEMER. Started out about 1400 and after a rough ride, stopping to find direction and turning back several times we finally reached the PW camp at about 1745.

What a desolate looking place. Of course, we were admitted. Ordered to delousing plant where we convinced the guards we were not lousy but would welcome a good shower. We got away with the shower.

We were then marched to a wooden one story barracks with a wire fence all around about 3-4 feet from building. This was the enclosure set aside for American, Canadian, and British PW's. They were not allowed outside.

The PWE was originally for Russians, Poles, French and Italians, however due to the fact that the area was surrounded and bridges were out it was not possible to send American, Canadian and British PW's to camps intended for them.

While taking showers Russian PW's were observed. Their physical condition was deplorable. They looked more like young camels--humped, emaciated, jaws hanging, legs so thin it was not understood how they could possibly carry the few pounds hanging on them. They all looked in the advanced stages of TB. Several dozen were observed in this condition. The appearance of these with clothes on indicated they were in the same condition. I learned that there were 24,000 Russian, Polish, French, and Italian prisoners confined there and 9,000 were suffering from TB and typhus. Deaths numbered 40 to 100 daily.

In our enclosure there were 26 officers and men. Our group made it 31 thus overcrowding the building. I inquired into the living conditions. I found the meals consisted of 1 cup of coffee and 1 bowl of soup twice a day, and 200 gms bread for each 10 men per day. The soup was always the same kind. I had one meal there and wouldn't care for the soup as a steady diet. It was made of oatmeal or rice. I could not tell which except the steady customers said it was oatmeal. The American, Canadian, and British PW's were treated far better than the others. Sometimes extra loaves of bread and some cheese would be included. Electric lights were also installed in the building but had to be out by 2030. The other prisoners were given only one bowl of soup per day. American, Canadian, and British PW's were not permitted to mix with other nationalities.

Included in the PWE were several 3 story brick barracks and a brick hospital building. I was told the barracks were filthy and lousy. Apparently no supervision was given sanitary conditions. Several of the inmates of our abode had spent some time in the hospital. They reported conditions in the hospital were far worse than in the camp. Food was worse and less of it. Medical care was a farce, unqualified doctors (quacks) only were there. Instruments were rusty and dirty. The place infested with lice, made it miserable for those in casts. The casts offered a haven for lice and no effort would be made to relieve the patient. It all boiled down to this: the soldiers in the hospital were fading away fast, not from their wounds, but from malnutrition, improper medical care, lice, and unsanitary conditions permitted to exist due to the lack of proper supervision. One soldier reported he had lost 65 lbs while in the hospital. Another said his arm was operated on but a second operation was necessary due to infection.

There was no American Red Cross Service at the PW camp. However the French shared their Red Cross packages with our prisoners.

The Russians were always around the enclosure offering cigarettes, soap, or anything they had to our PW's. Anything they received in the way of Red Cross items would be hurriedly rushed to the American PW cage and they would beg our PW's to take them. I experienced this myself during my short stay there. I looked out the window and saw two Russian prisoners at the fence waving their hands frantically. I was told that they had soap in their hands and wanted me to go outside and take their gift. I picked up what was supposed to be soap that had just been issued to me and showed it to them. They went down the fence until they could attract some other American, Canadian, or British PW.

I was about to turn in at 2045 when a haughty SOB came into the building hollering for the Oberst (Col) and the Mayeur (Major) who came in this afternoon. We promptly reported. We were told we were wanted at Div Hq. We, Major Ludeman and I, were whisked away in a vehicle something like our 3/4 T C & R.

It was during this trip that we planned our first attempt to escape. The night was very dark and rainy. Practically at every CR and RJ one of the two guards would get out to inquire which way to turn. Although equipped with maps it seemed they didn't know how to read them. During one of these stops I reached over and pulled a heavy jack between my legs. Major Ludeman secured a block of wood 4 x 4 and about 18" long. We were now lost in the wooded hills of the SAUERLAND. We had no idea where we were and neither did the guards.

We estimated we were about 35 or 40 miles from any American troops in the encirclement. I knew if we ever reached HUNNIGEN we could find our way from there. I had made a survey of the road signs while moving around there during our few hours stay that day. Figuring we were going right back to the PW camp as soon as interviewed at Div Hqa we decided to delay the operation until we were leaving HUNNIGEN. However this was frustrated. After a weary trip of stopping to ask the farmers for direction and turning back we finally reached HUNNIGEN to find nobody knew who wanted us. Eventually we were given a billet in a farmhouse. I slept on a bed, Major Ludeman slept on the floor using our interpreter's blankets.

Next morning we had our ersatz coffee and bread and margarine. Still nobody wanted to see us. However, I learned that it was not intended that Major Ludeman and I should have gone to the PWE. When the CG 116th PG Div heard we had been sent there he ordered us brought back and made as comfortable as possible and be given any consideration within reason. What the idea of all this was still remains a mystery. Perhaps we shouldn't have seen the deplorable conditions of the PWE. However, 3 hours were enough to get all the information necessary to form an opinion. Perhaps we might be useful later on when the end was not more than a few hours off.

A better and more comfortable billet was located for us. Here we were donated a bottle of cognac and a plate of eggs. Later in the evening some boiled milk was to be sent over from a farmhouse. This was frustrated by a sudden outcry that we must move to another town because our tanks had penetrated to within a short distance. We were rushed out and told to, load up in the 6 x 6. As we passed the house the lady met us with the milk. We tried to drink it but it was still boiling. We kept sipping at it until we finally had to go.

Everybody was confused. Nobody seemed to know what to do. When we got into the truck we discovered our number had been increased to 5, a French soldier (PW), a German civilian, and a German WAC or anti-aircraft auxiliary. These were picked up coming through the lines. Of course, we took the wrong road. We headed for the front lines instead of the opposite direction. This was discovered too soon.

We traveled until it got to the place where our guards didn't know where we were or where we were going. They decided to turn back to a little village called Enkhausen where we put up for the night. Here we were billeted in a gasthoff or cafe. In this house, when we were all assembled, six countries were represented -- Germany, France, Holland (our interpreter), Russia (girl forced labor in house), Ireland and the United States. Here we were treated like long lost brothers. Tea with cognac. Our interpreter, an accomplished piano player, tickled the ivory while the Russian servant girl sang. This girl was well known concert singer before being brought to Germany. She was a member of the 116th Panzer Div entertainment group, while that Division was in Russia. She was recognized immediately by our interpreter who was also a member of the group. She sang Russian and German songs. Our pianist could play anything you called for.

Two old people (Flugge) owned the place but their two daughters were there with their children. They were refugees from RECKLINGHAUSEN. Their home was destroyed by bombing and artillery. The daughters could speak French fluently and make themselves understood in English. The grandchildren could speak fair English having studied it in school. The husband of one of the daughters (Bucher) was a Nazi prisoner of war in Norway for nine months. His business was dealer in furs and was in Norway when that country was invaded. We were assured that the village of 250 were all Catholics and no Nazis. Probably true in this instance.

Couch cushions, pillows, and like articles were placed on the floor of the cafe since there were no rooms vacant in the house. When it came to looking for covers an amusing incident happened. The German police dog, member of our guard, always rode in the truck. No one but his master could do anything with the dog after dark. This guard was left behind to help defend the last place, HUNNIGEN, in the event our tanks broke through. Blankets carried in the truck were to be used as covers. When one of the guards went out to get them the dog wouldn't let him anywhere near the truck. Others tried but failed so we had to use what we could find in the house including the table cloths on the cafe tables. Got to bed about 0230.

I was now beginning to take notice of the civilian and military attitude towards the war. Practically every home had a refugee family and Russian, Polish, French, or Italian slave labor in it. As soon as you entered it you were pointed out the refugees who would immediately start relating their sad stories. They would tell you where they were from and how their homes had been bombed or destroyed by artillery fire and now they had no home and didn't know what to do. They would also assure us that they were not Nazis and were not to be blamed for the war. Also that they hated Hitler and his gang for causing all their misery. We were PW's and had to listen as we had to eat and were always in danger of being victims of fanatical Nazis. However, their line of chatter grew more monotonous and more unbearable from day to day. I would take a chance and break into their conversation and ask them what they thought about the thousands made homeless in England, France, Belgium, Holland, Poland and other countries of Europe by Nazi air and artillery over a period of six years. This question seemed to stump them and usually they wouldn't answer or they would try to change the trend of conversation.

Next morning, 7 April, had a good breakfast including fresh eggs and left about 0830 for Eisborn which we reached about 1000. We put up at a gasthof owned by the Bergomeister. Had lunch of pea soup and beer.

Took a walk in the afternoon with our interpreter looking for billets for the night. Finally met a young lady walking our way. Our interpreter asked her regarding quarters. She was out for exercise too so when we had gone far enough along the trail we turned back toward town. Our interpreter learned that her father and she were refugees from COLOGNE and that her husband was a soldier in Italy. She had a five year old child too. Also that she would be willing to give us a room with two beds and that the child and she would sleep somewhere else. Her offer was accepted, since so many Nazi soldiers were in town quarters were hard to get. This family put forth the same line of sad stuff which by this time seemed to be a well prepared line of propaganda. They did not get any sympathy from us.

We returned to the cafe and about 1800 were invited to have something to eat with the owner, the Bergomeister, Fred Dornsiepen. The dinner consisted of slices of cold smoked ham, bread, butter, jelly and cognac. During the meal the bergomeister expressed the people's great fear of the Russians if they occupied their community. He explained how treacherous the forced labor was getting since the Americans were getting so close. We stopped him there by asking him who brought the forced labor into the area. He was worried about the prisoners in the nearby PW camp when the Germans would have to give it up. He said they would break out and loot and kill at a wholesale rate. He also assured us he was no Nazi and wanted the war finished. We believed he wanted the war finished but we did not believe he was no Nazi. Prior to this time he had told us that he had a contract with the German government to accomodate 26 postal employees every two weeks during the summer months. They used it as a rest area.

We took another walk. Some SOB that I later learned was a finance NCO stopped us and wanted to know why PW's had to be exercised. He was soon straightened out by our interpreter guard. After a short walk we returned to our billet, sat, ate, and talked a while and went to bed.

0800 next morning, 8 April, we had coffee, bread and butter, and scrambled eggs for breakfast. Then off again to a place called HEGENSCHREID. Here we got very nice quarters including a very nice sitting room. Slept here that night but had to move to another house next morning, 9 April. This house was out in the sticks on the top of the highest hill around and about 750 meters above sea level. A very nice quiet place.

Two men from the 40th AIB, 8th Armd Div, Pvt Kenneth C. Hopson of Morristown, Tennessee and Pfc Hyman Cherry of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, joined us here. I questioned them but they were only reinforcements of about three weeks and could give no dope on our situation.

We were told we would probably stay here for a few days. However, early the morning of the 10th we were ordered to move again--this time in vicinity of the Div Fwd CP at LUBEKE.

While waiting for our guard to secure billets a German lieutenant hopped into our truck. He wanted to talk to us about America and about the war. He could speak fair English. He first assured us he was a Nazi. He was the second German officer to so declare himself. He had spent some time in the US and asked us a few questions regarding it. However, he soon broke into a long explanation why Germany was at war. He tried to explain his hatred for the Russians and the Jews. He made every effort to assure us that we would be fighting Russia and the Jews very shortly after this war was over. He deplored the primitiveness of present day Russia. This was also a constant topic with the guards and the German officers. The 116th Panzer Div had been in Russia for three years. Apparently this officer wasn't getting much satisfaction so as our truck moved away he fired a parting question "Are you going to send all the German officers to Russia after the war to repair damages done there by the German army?" We smiled and he jumped out of the truck.

Here Lt. Bradford K. Mac Gaw, Mt. Vernon, Iowa and Tec 5 Frank March, Kingston, Ga. of 148th Sig Co, 8th Armd Div were brought in. We got some good and welcome information from them regarding our progress and front lines.

This billet was the worst we had been in yet. Very small and only two rooms each about 10' x 10'. I had a bed but three guards slept on the floor. Major Ludeman slept on a couch with Lt. Mac Gaw, March, and two guards on the floor.

Got up next morning about 0830 and had our usual coffee and black bread and margarine with some kind of meat spread.

About 1100 Major Ludeman was taken to Div CP to be interviewed by Hauptmann (Capt) Holtermann, T/O position similar to our G-2. The questioning was not along military lines but more of a social and political trend. More about the Russians and Jews and how the US, England, and Germany would be fighting the bolshevists very shortly after the war. What was going to happen to the German prisoners after the war? Would they be sent to Russia? The desire of all Germans was for the American and British troops to get to Berlin before the Russians. In the afternoon Major Ludeman had another officer visitor who was after the same information.

About 1800 we were informed that Major General Von Valkenberg commanding the 116th Pan Div was coming back from the front and would stop in to visit us. Dr. Keller, Chief Interpreter and Interrogator came over to the billet, and invited us to the road to meet the general. The general shook hands and greeted us. The conversation dealt with our welfare. He talked about the fighting ability of the 8th Armored Division and his troops respected our artillery fire. He talked about the progress being made by our tanks over terrain thought impossible for armor. We were asked if we wished to go to the PW camp or stay near Div CP where we would be subject to dive bombing and strafing. We told him

we would rather remain near Div CP as we didn't mind the dive bombin and strafing but rather welcomed it, besides three hours at the PW camp was sufficient time to realize that it was no place for human beings. I also brought up the question of our sick and wounded in the camp hospital. It seemed to be all news to him although I had worked on this problem ever since my release from the PW camp. He assured me that the matter would be investigated and necessary action would be taken to correct the situation. It was agreed that those who were badly wounded and could be expected to be out of action for at least two months would be returned to American lines, if possible, if not they would be sent to hospitals in nearby towns. Slightly wounded would be sent to local hospitals. We also inquired about underwear and socks since we were all wearing the same underwear and socks we had on when captured. In my own case this was seven days. I found out that they were in the same boat. The division had been cut off from all supplies including service company trains and all they had was on their backs. Incidentally two wagon trains 116th Pz Div were captured by CCB, 8th Armd Div at BRANDENBURG, 20 April. We also expressed a desire for some cognac as the show was getting very monotonous. He laughed and made some remark which was not interpreted.

The general expressed a desire to inspect our billets. Of course, he was shown where the Oberst slept and where the Maveur slept but nothing was said about the other six sleeping on the floor. He seemed satisfied with the set up. After a few more informal remarks he departed for his CP about 1000 yards away.

The general was accompanied by Hauptman (Capt.) Holtermann G-2 who invited me to his quarters for an informal talk at 2030.

During this time Pfc Harold E. Miller of Danville, Illinois, 18th Tk Bn, 8th Armd Div was admitted to the PW Club. Had supper of coffee, black bread, meat spread, and sardines.

At 2030 I reported to Capt Holtermann's office. Our conversation was very informal and concerned mostly our own private lives, the Jews and the Russians. Dr. Keller was present as interpreter. During our conversation it was brought out that March and Miller were taken to the PW camp at HEMER. Capt Holtermann stated he didn't know anything about it and would not have sent them there if he had been consulted. Seeing a chance to save them from the horrors of the PW camp I suggested a phone call to camp as the truck could not have arrived there by this time and could bring them right back. There was no phone connection. Well, we hit a happy medium by bringing the NCO (March) back to be my orderly. A guard and 3/4 T truck were sent after March.

I took up the question of the PW camp hospital again. Holtermann assured me he would visit the hospital the following day and that something would be done about it. I also brought up the question of surrender and stop the useless slaughter of civilians and soldiers. This was about the sixth time I made this recommendation. I always got the same response. "We must remember what happened to the general who surrendered KONIGSBERG." On leaving I was presented with a bottle of Austrian Mountain Wine with the Commanding General's compliments.

Finished the bottle of Austrian Mountain Wine and went to bed. Before going to bed we were told we would be moving again early in the morning.

March arrived back about 2245 very well pleased indeed. He brought back the information that all American, Canadian, and British PW's were transferred that night at 1900 to another camp. This camp was believed to be nearby probably at IETHMATHE about 20 kms southwest from LUBEKE.

Up early (0800) next morning but no sign of moving. Dr. Keller visited us in reference to underwear, etc. He said the best he could do would be to loan us his night shirt and a pair of pajamas until we got our suit of underwear washed. However, since it was such a nice sunny day we declined his offer stating that we could get our underwear washed and dried while the sun was shining. He thought that was a good idea. He proceeded to instruct Cpl March how to go about washing my underwear. It wasn't necessary as our traveling hostess (AA Aux.) took over the job.

Visited by Dr. Keller a couple of times. One occasion called for our help in translating a complaint from a hospital at WIMPERN regarding our artillery fire. The report contained a request that the International Red Cross regulations be respected.

One other interesting thing occurred this date. Due to the fact that no American Red Cross facilities were available in the pocket no message could be sent to our families. The CG 116th Panzer Div told us that we could write a letter to our families and that it would be sent through the lines to the American side for mailing. How it would be done was not disclosed. This probably the first time in history that an thing like this had been done.

This same evening (12 April) Staff Sgt. Marvin C. Black of St. Joseph, Missouri, Co A 58th AIB, 8th Armd Div was brought in. He gave us some valuable information regarding our div troops and front lines. He remained with us to increase our number to five.

We prepared to spend the 3rd night in the same bivouac. This was the longest period spent in one bivouac area.

Got up about 0830, 13 April and there was no sign of moving. About 1000 I received word that Capt Holtermann would like to see Ludeman and me. The conversation concerned the wounded and sick in the PW camp. It was decided to send the patients through the lines in ambulances. Arrangements had to be made and approved by the Chief Surgeon of the German Army. While they were going through all this red tape it was believed our troops reached the vicinity of HEMER where the camp and hospital were located. So there the matter lays.

Now we were getting somewhere. The 116th Panzer Div realizing their existence would probably terminate in about four more days started talking turkey. Holtermann asked me if I had any plan in mind concerning the best way to get us back across the lines in the event the situation reached the stage when the CP couldn't find a safe place to move. Also what I would recommend to be the best way to ask for a truce, and what the condition of surrender might be. He said he didn't want an answer right away because he thought we might like to have some time to think it over. Now the ice was broken and we saw the beginning of the end. We left his company feeling something had been accomplished.

Later, about 1400, I got another hurried call to report to Capt Holtermann right away. I got there as fast as I could but on arriving at his office I found he was packing up. He explained he was sorry he couldn't see me as they had to move at once. Later I learned our tanks were only one kilometer away from the Fwd Ech of the Div CP.

This meant that we had to move too. Our interpreter guard and I returned to our billets and prepared to move. We moved to the vicinity of HEPPIGENSEN, after much ducking in and out of alleys, woods, etc, in order to avoid our artillery and airplanes. We witnessed the destruction of many vehicles that afternoon. We settled down in a very nice home and figured we were all set for the night. About 1700 we were told that the CP would move again. We mounted up and were taken to a place called LANDRAUSEN. Here

we were put in a very nice house. This proved to be a temporary situation also. While in this house two middle aged ladies of the house came into the room where we were seated and shook hands with all of us. They said they were happy and sorry the Americans were here and burst into tears. I assume they thought we were the advance guard or billeting detail. Soon thereafter we were ousted and shoved into a lesser desirable place which was also temporary. Here we were treated to boiled milk and wine. We eventually moved into another house where we had something to eat and went to bed. The artillery on both sides kept going all night, some of ours coming mighty close to our billets.

Got up at 0800, 14 April to learn we were to move again. This time to GERLINGSEN. We parked in a nearby woods. In this woods we saw scores of AAA soldiers just sitting around, no equipment in sight, and apparently nobody in command. I later learned that they were all Hollanders and that their AA weapons had been destroyed. Now they were on their own since there was no further use of them. I was led to believe that they too, bet on the wrong horse.

About 1100 Capt Holtermann sent for me to meet him in an open field where he could talk to me without fear of interruption. The conversation dealt entirely with capitulation by the 116th Panzer Div. He wanted to know what terms could be expected by a division with a fighting reputation like the 116th Panzer Division so that it could be an honorable surrender. I told him the terms would be unconditional surrender. He wanted to know what they would have to do and whether men and officers whose homes were in the pocket or adjacent areas could be permitted to see their families and report to military authorities in their home towns. I told him that the latter was definitely out. Some of the things they would have to do might be listed as follow: 1. No destruction of vehicles, weapons, ammunition, gasoline, or other military stores. 2. Individual weapons and crew served weapons (except those emplaced in permanent or semi-permanent positions) and ammunition would be deposited in well defined locations by company, battery, or battalion. 3. Large caliber weapons in permanent or semi-permanent emplacements reported by coordinates. 4. Civilians to display white flags on all buildings indicating that there were no military personnel in civilian clothes or uniform in the building. 5. No military personnel would change to civilian clothing. 6. Military personnel would be assembled by company, battery, or battalion and await instructions from American Army. 7. When American troops entered a town, village or other small community civilians would remain indoors until otherwise instructed by Military Government personnel. 8. The bergmeister and civilian police would be held responsible for the orderly conduct of civilians. 9. Looting or attempted looting, sabotage or attempted sabotage meant death on sight. 10. Civilians would not tamper with or disturb or remove any military equipment, stores, etc. The above would be subject to approval of higher headquarters. This appeared to be along the lines expected by the Commanding General 116th Panzer Div. Then I was requested to be a member of the truce party that was planned to be sent into the American Lines 15 April. I told them I would welcome the opportunity. That was all.

Later in the afternoon soldiers around us were showing signs of war fatigue, lack of ambition, wishing the war would end today for them. They made fun of Hitler, imitating his method of speech and quoting his advertised statement " Give me five years and I won't recognize Germany again." Two guards got drunk.

This was a bad day for air otherwise our Air Corps would have had a field day. The roads were lined with all types of military vehicles, American vehicles (2-1/2 T, 1-1/2 T, 3/4 T, 1/4 T, 1/2 Trucks) captured in the bulge, horse drawn wagons and even *

one and two horse buggies. They paid no attention to maintenance and ran motor vehicles until they failed mechanically. When a vehicle could no longer be operated, due to mechanical failure, it was burned. No effort would be made to salvage any parts or any equipment or supplies carried in the truck. It was not unusual to see one truck towing three or four other vehicles lacking gasoline but otherwise alright.

Moved again about 4 kms to CR in REFFLEINGSEN, Guards and PW's (total eleven) slept in the barroom of the Gasthaus.

15th April. Up at 0800, breakfast of black ersatz coffee and black bread. Then a conference with Capt Holtermann at 1100. At this time I expected final arrangements for surrender would be completed and that we would soon be heading for the American lines. I was sadly disappointed. He gave us the situation effecting the battle for the pocket. He told us the Division was forced to fight to the last and this was the last stand. The Commanding General and other leaders feared reprisals such as happened to the families of the military leaders after the surrender of KONIGSBERG. It appeared they were all arrested by Hitler's regime.

Unit commanders were instructed that they were on their own at the crucial moment. It was thought also that some troops would try to break through to the east. That the Division Headquarters and all Division Staff would go to a nearby woods, which was considered safe from our artillery fire, and remain there until our troops arrived. They would offer no resistance.

I was told I had the choice of staying in the house at the CR or going into the woods until such time as our troops caught up with us or overran the CP. Again he expressed the desire that I accompany him for conference with American commander when the time was ripe. I agreed to this since I couldn't convince him that he was making a big mistake by not following out the original plan to surrender at this time. I again reminded him of our artillery.

Late that afternoon I learned that our 7th Armored Division was closing in from the south and east and were now determined to complete the mission of destroying all enemy troops in the pocket.

I also learned that the CGs of the 53rd Panzer Corps, 180th Inf Div, and 190th Inf Div were guests of the CG 116th Panzer Div and would remain there throughout the night.

In the afternoon we inspected the area around our billet for a suitable place to get under cover until our troops arrived rather than go to the woods. We could not find any worth considering. At this time our interpreter guard Coche, who was promoted to 2nd Lt. that morning, suggested that we get into the 6 x 6 and after dark take off for our lines. This didn't seem to be a very sound proposition at this stage. We would be risking our lives against sticking it out here for a few hours longer. We would run a chance of being shot by our own troops as well as the Germans. However, I asked our interpreter guard to see the Hauptmann Holtermann and find out if it would be possible to send us through to our own lines before it got dark. We could take the 6 x 6, which would eventually be ours, and drive to German front lines under guard then under white flags to our own line. I received no reply. Coche (interpreter) returned and stated the General requested us to go to the CP in the woods. We did and after much delay we arrived at an isolated farm house. This place was filled with krauts.

Soon our artillery started and soon the krauts changed their minds. About 2000 Holtermann arrived at our billet perspiring like a race horse. He asked for Lt. Mac Gaw to accompany a division staff officer through the lines to request cessation of

of hostilities, then he and I would go, over to make arrangements for surrender. They, MacGaw and Coche, reached Div DP but were unable to proceed further on account of our artillery fire. On one occasion Lt MacGaw was forced to hit the ground but found himself in a creek under a bridge and wet to the waist. They returned to our billet about 2445

Intense artillery fire continued all night and certainly put fear in the krauts. The troops around the farmhouse were now an uncontrollable mob. Some wandered off to the woods. Officers deserted their troops and sought cover in the woods. The cellar in the farmhouse was declared for use of civilians and prisoners. However, at the first shelling of the area the kraut soldiers filled the cellar and we were forced to stay in our room. We welcomed the sound of our artillery bursting all around us but hoped our room would be spared. Our hopes were not in vain.

At daybreak I stood in the doorway and counted 40 dead cattle and 15 dead horses in and around the farmhouse. Buildings and supply wagons were wrecked. I have heard many remarks made by the Germans regarding the accuracy and severity of our artillery fire. Now I believed their statements were correct. I have no desire to be caught in one of our artillery concentrations again.

At 0530 Lt MacGaw and Lt Coche left for Div CP to cross line for truce.

At 0600 I recommended that all arms be deposited in one room or in the center of the farmyard and that all German soldiers assemble in the basement and await the arrival of the American troops. Also that white flags be displayed from every building. No German officer could be located. However, except for 15 fanatics who took to the woods all followed my instructions. We disarmed our guards. We equipped ourselves with our own choice of enemy weapons.

The farmhouse was now receiving machine gun fire from our tanks. No one knew how close our tanks were. It was considered wise to have a white flag of some description available in case the American troops would suddenly appear. The nearest white rag would do. I was standing near a baby crib. I looked into it and saw what I thought was a bundle of laundry. Blackout was still on inside the house. I grabbed something white and stuck it in my hip pocket. Later in the day I discovered I had deprived a young lady of an undershirt.

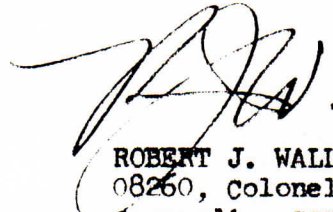
Firing stopped and arrangements were made for surrender of the 53rd Panzer Corps consisting of 116 Panzer Div, 180 Inf Div, 190 Inf Div and a combat group of the 9th Panzer Div

At 0930 a German officer called for us at our billet to take us to 116th Panzer Div CP. On the way I met Col Jack Ryan, C/S 7th Armd Div. From then on we were free. Went with Jack Ryan to Panzer Corps Headquarters and met Gen Lt Byerlein Corps Commander 53rd Panzer Corps, Gen Von Waldenburg CG 116th Panzer Div, Gen Maj Klostader-Kemper 180th Inf Div, Gen Maj Hammer 190th Inf Div, Col Zollenkopl 9th Panzer Division.

On one occasion we were visited by Oberpfarrer (Chaplain) Carl R. Kruger and Dr. (?) Clothe. They explained that the church in Germany had pressure on it. That in the SS and Gestapo there were no chaplains. In the Wehrmacht units they had Catholic and Protestant Chaplains. They also had great fear of Bolshevism and the Russians. They talked about the great primitiveness of Russia, except in the cities.

It was also explained to us by a high ranking officer why General Von Schwerin was relieved by Hitler as commanding general 116th Panzer Division. When the Allied troops were approaching AACHEN he wanted to save the city by not offering any resistance. This was disapproved by Hitler. Again when the Allied troops had crossed the German border, Von Schwerin wanted to end the war in order to save the German cities, towns and villages from destruction. He was promptly relieved by Hitler and sent to Italy and given an insignificant command.

Col Guderian, son of the famous German tank expert Gen Guderian was C/S and Asst Div Commander 116th Panzer Div.



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