

Preamble

While I am still of relatively sound mind I want to record the events of my life as I remember them. The principal reason for writing this autobiography is to give my children a more complete background study of my life than that which they now have as the result of anecdotal stories and vignettes they have heard - some many times over.

These reminiscences are also prompted by the realization that I really did not know very much about my own father's youth and early

mentorhood. When I was finally ready to ask questions of him - it was too late.

Finally, I believe strongly that heritage is stronger than environment and that the genes of forefathers play a determining part in the development of their progeny. In other words, descendants may be able to understand themselves better if they know what made their progenitor tick.

Keeping this in mind, I will try to draw my picture "warts and all" and be as objective as I can.

After all, one can learn from faults - by trying not to duplicate them - as much as from virtues - if there are any.

In order not to just ramble on
and give the narrative some coherency,
I will divide my life into successive
periods. These time-frames will obviously
overlap and not all have a distinct
beginning and ending.

The time: 1935. The place: Germany or to be more exact "Konzentrationslager" Lichtenburg one of the infamous detention camps of the Third Reich. Here Hitler's Secret Police held so called enemies of the State without trial or due process of law for as long as it pleased them. The Lichtenburg was ideally suited for this purpose. Located on the Torgau heath near the Elbe river it was far removed from any heavily populated area. The fact that so many Germans after the war claimed that they hardly knew about the existence of concentration camps may be at least in part the result of the isolated locations of these prisons.

The Lichtenburg has an interesting history. Originally built as a castle of robber-knights it was a monastery for a long time until it became a maximum security prison earlier in this century and was surrounded by a high wall and had some modern cell-blocks added to its medieval architecture.

Now it rose fortress-like as a forbidding

symbol of Nazi "justice" out of the plain.

This ^{was only 20 years old} when I was here I found myself nearly in 1935. My "crime" had been to be the son of a prominent family who were anti-Hitler. Admittedly I had made no secret of my sentiments and had given lectures ^{at High Schools and colleges} on the evil of Nazism while studying in Switzerland and in the U.S. when I visited my grandmother and other members of my American-born mother's family. Not wanting to expose their informants in public the GESTAPO never brought me to trial. On my ^{secret} last visit from Switzerland to say goodbye to my parents before leaving for the U.S., I was arrested and shortly disappeared behind the massive gates of Lichtenburg.

Enough has been written about the concentration camps; so the reader has a pretty good idea what the life of a political prisoner was like. Actually, I was fortunate in that the head guard of my block was the grandson of a woman who as a young girl had worked as a maid in my grandparents' house. When she left to get married she had been

given a dorry and had kept telling her grandson of the wonderful years of her service. Perhaps my grandparents' generosity and the old woman's stories had convinced this otherwise uncompromising guard that a descendant of such a family could not be all bad. In any event he made my life bearable. Then I became ill.

Once a week the village barber would come to shave us. Some fellow inmate must have had a case of impetigo which was transmitted to me because my face started breaking out with herpes. From there it spread to my hands and then every^{to} my feet. To say I was utterly miserable is an understatement. There was no medication available to us and I would not have known how to use it.

Finally I decided to go on sick-call. One literally had to be at death door to go to the infirmary. Anyone else was suspect of being a shunner and treated accordingly. But despite all my disillusion about the inherent goodness of my fellowman I clung to the hope that a doctor - Nazi

or not - would help me. At this time I must have remembered our kindly family physician who took care of me as I child for it was with almost childlike faith that I lined up in front of the doctor's office.

After a few guards had been ministered to the line of prisoners shuffled forward, some so sick they could barely walk.

And then it was my turn. On entering I came to the required position of attention and reported. I was looking on a young man dressed in the regular SS uniform who was sitting behind a desk examining some papers. Without raising his eyes, he asked "What do you want?" I tried to describe my condition but before I had gotten very far, the doctor looked up at me. A cigarette was hanging from his lips which he did not remove while he spoke. His eyes were full of contempt.

"So you're afraid your face will scar" he said with a malicious grin, "well all the better. Get out."

I stood unbelieving and

started to mumble something about infecting the other prisoners.

His grin changed to a scowl and half rising he pointed to the door with a resounding "Pew".

Our eyes met for a ^{brief} moment but a moment I will never forget. All the arrogance ^{of a bully} and the hate of a demagogue were in his. If he had been able to read my thoughts he would have known my wish "Someday, somewhere may we meet again under different circumstances."

Shortly thereafter I was released through the intervention of influential friends abroad. I remember running the three miles to ^{the} nearest railroad station with two suitcases in my hands so afraid was I that I might be called back. Competent medical treatment healed the impetigo and I left for the U.S.

College and Law School followed and when the U.S. entered the war I enlisted in the Army.

As a member of Gen. Patton's 3rd U.S. Army I participated in the

invasion and was field -
commissioned during the French
campaign.

The end of the war finds me
in Bavaria as a Military Government
Officer.

The year now is 1946 and the
place is Munich. I have civilianized
and been appointed Chief of the
Legal Advice and Legislation Branch
of the Office of Military Government
for Bavaria.

On May 27th the Commanding
General calls for me. As usual
he is short and to the point. I
am to be in front of my quarters
at 0600 the next morning in
Class A uniform and maintain
absolute secrecy about this
assignment. Further orders will
follow. I must have looked
rather perplexed but all I get
out of the General is some
statement such as "nasty job
this . . . got to be done . . . sorry
pick you . . . need german speaking
legal officer . . . that's all"

*
from my work in the People's Division I know of the Reimann crimes
I have wish most committed in conducting the board of the
some Nazi doctors and performed for their soldiers victims.

The next morning finds me outside my billet with "ribbons and decorations" on as prescribed. full of expectation. I don't have to wait long. Exactly at six o'clock a jeep with M.P. followed by a big black sedan with another jeep behind pull up. The sedan has a two star plaque - a Major General. An M.P. opens the door for me and I get in. The General introduces himself and I learn that he is the Provost Marshal for the U.S. occupied Zone of Germany. We ride in silence while the convoy leaves Munich via the Autobahn towards Augsburg. Finally the General turns to me and says "we should be able to get this done in two days." My reply that I did not know the nature of our mission brought forth this answer "Why, we are going to hang the first 28 Nazi criminals at Landsberg prison."

Perhaps, because I had had no breakfast I started to feel slightly squeamish. During the campaign I had seen enough casualties but hanging was another thing.

The General then explained to me that the condemned had all been found guilty of crimes against humanity. Most were concentration camp guards who had killed inmates including Allied prisoners of war.* My duties were also made known to me. Actually I was to be more or less in charge of the proceedings. After a last interrogation in their cell each prisoner was ^{to} be taken to a courtyard by six N.P. and then up the traditional thirteen steps to a gallows where I was to read the sentence to him in German and ask him if he wanted to make a last statement.

While we were going over these details our convoy had arrived at Landsberg prison where Hitler had been incarcerated after the abortive Munich Putsch and where he wrote part of the Nazi bible his "Mein Kampf."

I was surprised to see the prison completely cordoned off by troops and even machineguns on the walls. These security measures were taken to prevent any possible attempt to liberate the

* O.P.s had been Nazi doctors on their jobs. They performed "experiments"

prisoners. In any event it gave the old fortress-like prison a very grim and purposeful air. I could not help but be reminded of the Lichtenburg.

After credentials had been checked I inspected the place. Two gallows had been erected side by side. One was to be operated by the same Sergeant who also carried out the Nuremberg executions. Busying himself about the other scaffold was a civilian in a full dress suit whose helpers wore tuxedos. It reminded me of a German restaurant where rank was carefully observed by tie and tails.

The civilian it turned out was the German High Executioner, a job handed down from father to son since the middle ages. As I later learned his record stood at about 2500 executions against a mere 30 or so for the Sergeant.

I had a word with the six MP guards and the Catholic and Protestant Army chaplains as well as their two German counter-

parts. Then I noticed the General pointing at his wristwatch and knew it was time to get started on our grim task.

The procedure was simple. We had divided the 28 prisoners into groups of four which meant 7 executions each morning and afternoon for two days. I would go into the cell of the man next on my list. After asking each prisoner if he had any further information to give - which all declined - I would lead him into the hall. Two chaplains of his faith would take their places next to the condemned man and the MP would line up three on each side. I would walk at the end of the procession and give the command "Forward March!" Invariably the prisoner would fall in step out of ingrained military training.

As we reached the court-yard the company of Military Police would come to attention and remain this way until the execution was over.

At the foot of the scaffold we

would come to a halt and the prisoner's hands were tied behind his back with a white string.

Two M.P., the German chaplain and I accompanied the prisoner to the platform of the gallows. After tying the man's legs together the M.P. would step back. It was then that I read the sentence in German to the condemned and at the end asked him if he had a last statement to make. I remember well the first prisoner turning to me and saying "I hope when your time comes you'll die as bravely as I am".

Most of those to die said that they had only done their duty under orders. A few hoped for a better Germany of the future. Some even thanked their captors for the good treatment they had received.

Then the executioners took over. A black hood was placed over the prisoner's head and the noose adjusted. The German chaplain meantime read a psalm.

At this point, as previously arranged, I would nod to the executioner who would

spring the trap and the condemned drop to his death. It was all over mercifully quick and our medics assured me that those executed in this manner die instantly of a broken neck. Nevertheless my knees shook after the first man fell.

Fortunately my duties kept me busy and I had little time to reflect on the finality of our action.

During the morning we hanged one of the doctors the international tribunal had found guilty. He was an old man and completely resigned. He had been an expert in tropical diseases and had injected malaria in his bayonet "patients". When I came to get him he was still working on his thesis. He did not want a chaplain claiming that he was a freethinker. When his hands were being tied he turned and looked at me as if to say "is this really necessary" and when the hood was in place I could hear his muffled voice "let's get this over with".

The third name that afternoon showed another doctor. The light was poor in his cell and I only noticed that he was a younger man. I followed him on his way to the gallows as I had the others.

On the scaffold I unfolded the document containing the sentence and started to read the precise legal phrases proclaiming his guilt.

"... In that you did treacherously and maliciously ... prisoners under your care ... in the concentration camps of Ravensbrück, Dachau and Lichtenburg."

Involuntarily I stopped. Over the lowered sheet of paper I looked at the prisoner. Surprised he turned his head toward me and our eyes met.

Years had passed, both of us had changed but nevertheless there was instant mutual recognition. This was ^{unmistakenly} my doctor from the Lichtenburg.

I resumed reading automatically but before me I saw the scene eleven years ago, could still

heard the autocratic voice ordering me to get out and feel the lust I had suffered then.

I finished reading and asked the prisoner if he wanted to make a last statement.

He gazed at me. The look ^{was still there,} of arrogance and hate. Slowly he shook his head, the only one not to speak.

Thirty seconds later his body was dangling at the end of the taunt rope. To the chaplain's final "and may God have mercy on your soul" I added my Amen. The hands of time had made a full turn.

Konzentrationslager Lichtenburg
Politische Abteilung.

Am 28. Oktober 1935.

Entlassungsschein.

Der Schutzhaftgefangene Felix Friedheim

geb. 21.8.1914 zu Köthen

war bis zum heutigen Tage im Konzentrationslager Lichtenburg verwahrt.

Laut Verfügung ^{der} ~~des~~ Geheimen Staatspolizei Berlin
Staatspolizeistelle II 1 D

vom 25. Oktober 1935 wurde die Schutzhaft aufgehoben.



Lagerkommandant

I. A.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'K. Schmidt', written over a horizontal line.

Anhaltische Politische Polizei
(Geheime Staatspolizei)

Deffau, den 18. Oktober 1935.
Postschlüsselach 192

Fernruf Nr. 3091 u. 1722 — Nachruf Nr. 1722
Aktenzeichen -7053/35 I 5. -
(Angabe erbeten bei Rückschreiben)

~~Satz~~

An

den Studenten Felix F r i e d h e i m ,
geboren am 21. August 1914 in Köthen,

zurzeit in Lichtenburg b/Prettin/Elbe.

Konzentrationslager.

Betr.: Aufenthaltsverbot.

Auf Grund des § 1 der Verordnung des Reichsprä-
sidenten zum Schutz von Volk und Staat vom 28. Februar 1933
(Reichsgesetzbl. I S. 83) wird Ihnen hiermit jeder Aufenthalt
im Gebiet des Landes Anhalt bis auf weiteres untersagt.

Zu widerhandlungen werden nach § 4 der oben erwähn-
ten Verordnung bestraft.

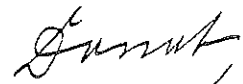
B e g r ü n d u n g :

Die Vorgänge, die seinerzeit zu Ihrer Inschutz-
haftnahme führten, sind im hiesigen Staatsgebiet allgemein be-
kannt geworden. Es ist daher zu befürchten, dass es im Falle
Ihrer Rückkehr nach Anhalt erneut zu Störungen der öffentlichen
Sicherheit und Ordnung kommt.

In Vertretung :

gez. S e n s .

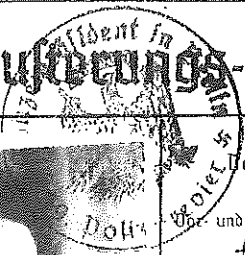
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(Donat)

Oberwachtmstr. d. Schutzpolizei.

Musterungs-Ausweis 1935



Der Dienstpflichtige des Jahrgangs 19/14

Vor- und Zuname

Felix Frankfurter

Beruf

Stüvint

geboren am

21. August 1914

zu

Hölggen

Untere
Berm.-
Beh.

Reg.-Bezirk

Hamm

Land

Westfalen

hat sich zur Musterung 1935 gestellt.

Entscheid: *Res. Res.*

Der Entscheid ist auf der punktierten Linie **abgekürzt** eingetragen. Es bedeutet:

- a) „Tauglich“ Tauglich 1, 2 oder bedingt tauglich
- b) „Reserve“ Überweisung zur Reserve
- c) „Erf. Ref.“ Überweisung zur Erfahresreserve II
- d) „Zurückgestellt“ Zurückstellung bis zur Musterung 1936
- e) „Ausgemustert“ Nichteranziehung zum Wehrdienst
- f) „Ausschluß“ Ausschluß vom Wehrdienst

(Eigene handschriftliche Unterschrift)
Friedrich

K. W. S.

(Kreispolizeibehörde)

Ort

Hamm

Den

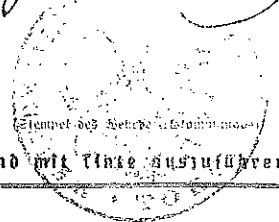
27. August

1935

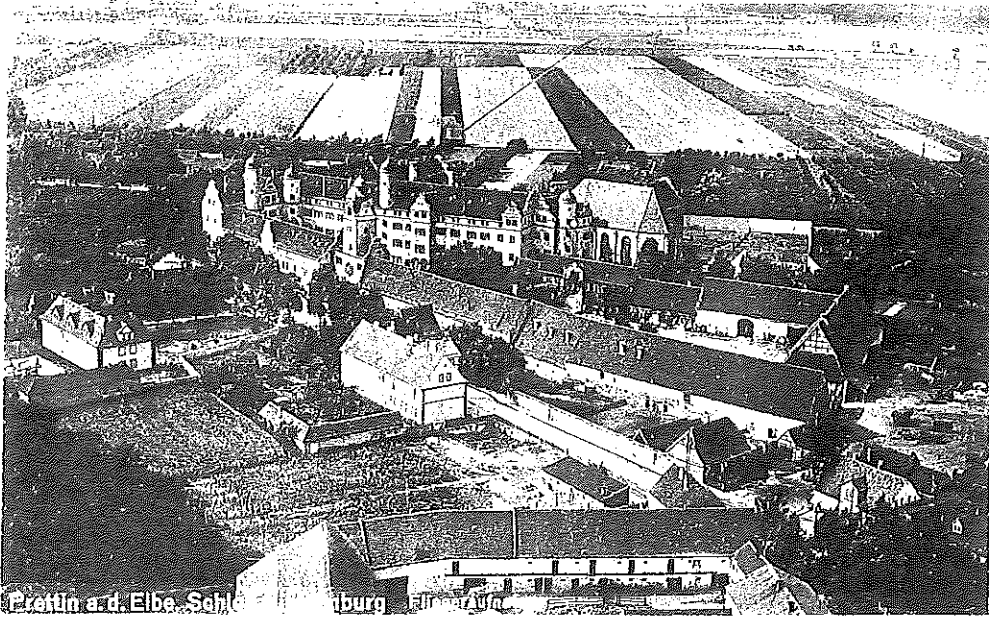
(Unterschriften)

F. J. S.

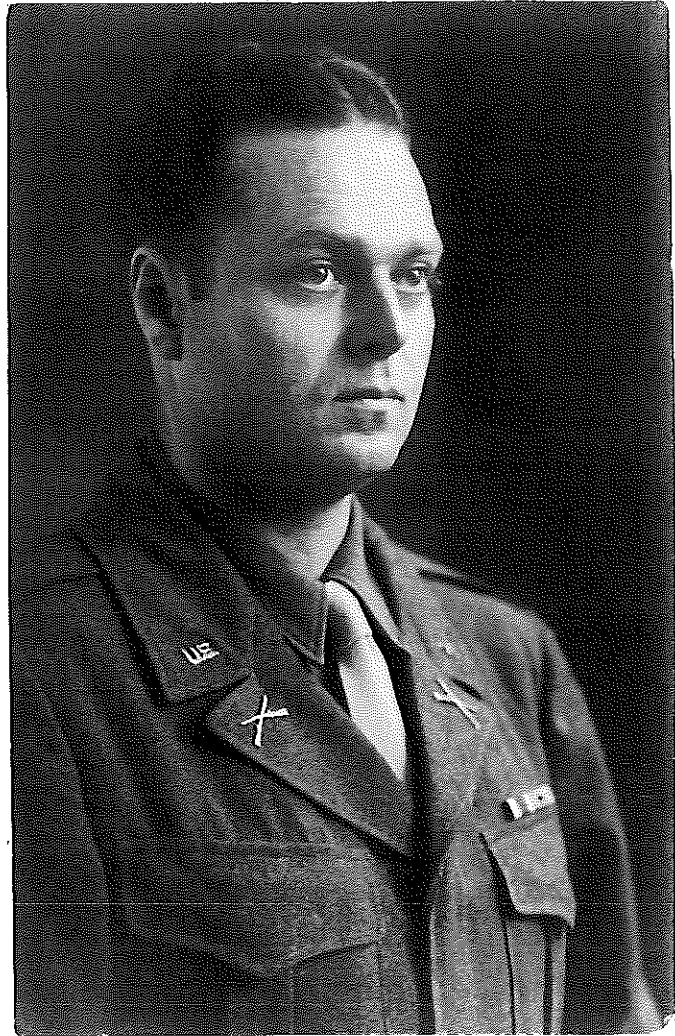
(Wehrbezirkskommandeur)



Alle Eintragungen in den Musterungsausweis sind mit Tinte auszuführen



Cottbus a. d. Elbe, Schleierbusse, Cottbus, Cottbus







← My Father