

~~BEETES~~
JACK ~~BRIDGES~~

PITTSBURGH

(seems to have begun earlier)

Paton's army moved fast - 35 miles a day until winter set in. He was at Bastone - went to the front = about 10 or 15 miles from there.

His unit was impacted by driving energy of ^{PATTON}~~Paton~~. He saw him personally at the Rhone.

Crossing the Rhine was scary. About half way across you could see everything over there. Church bells started ringing and they thought they were recognized. But there were three task forces landed before they knew where they were. Then they pushed on into Germany.

He had no idea of what they would discover in Germany. He had no idea about the camps.

His impression of the German soldier - Nazis - they were well-disciplined and had superior equipment. They were a fine group of disciplined soldiers and fought well and they had respect for them. They had no concept of what the Nazis has done to people until they were deep into Germany. They heard about Buchenwald and went to see.

He read of their impressions:

it was gruesome - bodies piled high

His own impressions were far more vivid - shows pictures of bodies piled high
Talked with inmates and he could see how inhuman it was.
People had to sleep on their sides - one against another. Surgery had been performed without medicine or experienced people.
It was dangerous to give away chocolates or food - they were told not to do that.

The Commandant liked tatoos - bodies had them. The skin was sent out for lamp shades to be made of it.

There was a great difference between the dignity with which the US treated the German dead. These people were treated with utter disrespect and contempt.

He doesn't think most of the German soldiers or people knew about the camps - they were horrified. The SS guards were a different breed - tied into the Gestapo.

He believes most older people in Germany didn't know and were as horrified as we were.

2.

JACK BRIDGES

Buchenwald was more than just Jewish people. The reaction of victims to U.S. soldiers was overwhelming - in France as well. There was great joy. For every one soldier in the front it was comfortable to know that there were 9 support people.

When they first went through, they received a hero's welcome. After support people went and they went back - not the same.

Went from Germany to Antwerp and then came back to the U. S. in 1945.

The experience of American soldier in coming across camps was a confrontation of man's inhumanity to man. Emotionally the same as being in battle. They tried to shed the bad, but can't forget the concentration camps. He never considered himself discriminatory and this convinced him that if he had any ounce of these feelings - . . .

All portrayals in news and books depicted the same experience he had.

We never want to forget. He firmly believes we should never forget the holocaust.

[How could a normal person do this?] He can't explain it. He was in contact with German POWs afterwards - they said they were soldiers just doing their duty. A strong force can intimidate people to follow orders. A good soldier takes orders.

He admired Germany for their resourcefulness - the way they came back after the War.

He agrees that civilization is a thin veneer - it doesn't take much to strip it away.

The boys in Vietnam didn't think they were doing the right thing. He knew he was doing the right thing. He didn't have to deal with guilt feelings. His own position on the Vietnam war - he was a Dove.

Today's American soldier uses a lot of his own initiative and judgment. Germans couldn't show their own initiative.

Is the world a better place today? Yes. The memory of the Holocaust should be preserved.

Each generation is better educated and brighter. He tried to teach his kids to think for themselves.