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James Moncrief was a Lt. Colonel, a staff officer in general headquarters when the 11th Army overran Buchenwald. The mission was to fight, so they didn't stay long. They left supplies and a medical company and then the army had to send occupying forces. A patrol commanded by Captain Fred Keopfer had heard about the camp and with Sgt Gotschalk who understood German and Russian radioed the existence of the camp to Captain Bennett who sent Mondcrief.

They were at the north rim of the camp when the Russian prisoners came out after the Germans had all left. There was no fighting. The Americans were overpowered by the prisoners who were very happy to see them, hugging them. The prisoners were all skin and bones. There was a young man they called doctor who explained to them that there had been between 18-20 thousand prisoners in the camp. Inside the barracks was horrible; inmates in stacked bunks who didn't even have energy to turn their heads. There was no food, no place to sit. There were 2 big ovens in the crematoria. They were told prisoners were brought in alive, tied by their feet and they found claw marks in the walls and stacks of bodies outside.

Soldiers didn't specifically know about the camps... they knew there were some camps but had no idea of the horror and brutality. There was a G4 at headquarters, Kale Boggs, who later became a senator from Delaware. The army asked them to send medicine and food.