

RG-50.759.0074

Summary

Norman Kunkel was a 26-year-old soldier, who volunteered to be attached to the British Army and served with the British as a non-combatant medic, with the honorary rank of a 2nd Lieutenant and access to the British Officers Club. After the British Army had liberated the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, Norman was engaged to evacuate women prisoners from their barracks, by ambulance, to a near-by German Officers Training facility, where British nurses effected their cleanup and provided beds with clean linens. The prisoners did not want to part from their meager belongings when they were moved, but that was necessary since lice were everywhere; they were in pain when placed onto stretchers. The women had been quartered in packed barracks, they were all emaciated and all seemed to look alike, as skeletons with skin over bones. Most were older, but there also were some teenagers. All were sickly; 100% suffered from dysentery, 95% had tuberculosis, 75% had typhus fever and 99% were starved. The 1 % who were not starved had been acting in a supervisory capacity over other prisoners, like a woman, who was pregnant and still in good physical condition.

Norman found out that about 60% of the prisoners were male, 30 % female and 10 % children. The prison population was 1/5th Poles, 1/5th Hungarians, 1/5th Russians, Checks and Yugoslavs, 1/5th French, Greeks and Italians and 1/5th Jews. There were 26,000 corpses which had to be buried; bulldozers were used to place about 1,000 bodies in each mass grave. He also found out that about 50,000 prisoners had died during the months of January thru March and another 10,000 in April; thereafter there was no more food for the prisoners. Norman saw the crematorium where bones and teeth could still be seen in the ovens and a huge mountain of shoes, taken from prisoners, was piled in front, about 20' in diameter and 15' high, out in the open. He did not visit any other buildings in the camp.

When Norman came home, he did not talk about his experience. He was nervous and tense and often thought about the camp and remembered all the sickness and particularly one young Romanian girl who he still could picture. He was not angry as much as he felt sorry for all those inmates.