

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

G. K. "Joe" Guennel

Littleton, CO

May 28, 2009

Member of

I.P.W. Team 124

(Interrogation, prisoners of War)

3rd and 44th Infantry Divisions

7th Army

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is May 28, 2009. I am interviewing G. K. "Joe" Guennel by telephone. His telephone number is 303-794-7080. His address is 835 Front Range Rd, Littleton, Colorado 80120. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II.

Mr. Misenhimer

Joe, I want to thank you for taking time today to do this interview and I want to thank you for your service to our country during World War II. I would like to read the agreement to you, Would that be ok?

Mr. Guennel

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

"Agreement read." Is that ok with you?

Mr. Guennel

Yes.

Mr. Misenhimer

The next thing I would like to do is get an alternative contact. We find out that several years down the road when we try to get back in contact with a veteran, he has moved or something. Do you have a son or daughter that we can contact to know where you are?

Mr. Guennel

I don't have anybody really, except my neighbor. I can give you a name.

Mr. Misenhimer

That would be fine.

Mr. Guennel

He is a Korean Vet; he lives across the street from me. His name is Michael Pisano. His address is 840 Front Range Road, Littleton, Colorado 80120.

Mr. Misenhimer

Do you have a phone number for him by chance?

Mr. Guennel

I should have right here. I can't remember numbers. That's one of my weaknesses. I'll have to look it up.

Mr. Misenhimer

That is ok, I hope we don't need it, you never know. But we can get it through information or something.

Mr. Guennel

I can always fill it in later. The same thing applies to dates. I may not remember the dates when we are talking, but later on I can do it in writing. OK. The number is: 303-794-8861.

Mr. Misenhimer

Like I said, when I get this back from the transcriber, I'll check back with you on the accuracy of everything. At that point we can also make any changes.

Mr. Guennel

Ok.

Mr. Misenhimer

When is your birthdate?

Mr. Guennel

December 24, 1920.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mr. Guennel

In Oelsnitz, Germany.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Mr. Guennel

No, I do not.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were your parent's names?

Mr. Guennel

My dad's name was Kurt, and my mother's name was Klara.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to school over there?

Mr. Guennel

Well, basically, this may be of some importance. I spent 4 years in elementary school and then I was selected for an elite-type high school, called Oberschule. So, this was from 5th grade to 8th grade. And, so when I came to this country in 1934, September 10, I lost half a year of school because the German school year starts at Easter, whereas here we start in September. So, I had some 8th grade already, but that was lost.

Mr. Misenhimer

How come you moved to the U.S.?

Mr. Guennel

Well, it was because of my father. He had applied to emigrate in the early twenties, but there was a quota system-only so many Germans could immigrate to the United States per year. There was a waiting period after he put in his name. When his number finally came up, in 19258, he left with the understanding that my mom and I would follow him once he was settled and had enough money, as many immigrants do. He left just before Christmas 1928. Well, in 1930 he had developed Kidney stones in both kidneys and all the saved money went down the drain, because there was practically no insurance in this country at that time. The doctors couldn't operate, so he went back to Germany to die, you know, with his family. Well, miraculously, after ten months, he was back on his feet. Some guy from a neighboring village told us about a homeopath who had saved his life. With herbal medicines the kidney stones were dissolved and ejected. My dad got itchy and he went back to the States in 1931, with money borrowed from his sister. It took another three years to get a job in one particular place. At that time the hosiery business was shifting from the east coast down south, to Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama and so forth. He was constantly moving, re-erecting those immense hosiery machines. He finally got a job in one place, maintaining machines in a hosiery mill in Bangor, PA. So, in 1934 my mom and I arrived in Bangor. I went to high school there, actually started in the 8th grade.

Mr. Misenhimer

You came over on a ship, I presume?

Mr. Guennel

Yes I did.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that ship trip over?

Mr. Guennel

It was pretty nice, although I did get seasick a few times. It was the "Bremen", which was one of the great steamers of that time. I think it took 6 or 7 days; we went from Bremerhaven, Germany to Cherbourg, France and then on to New York.

Mr. Misenhimer

What kind of accommodations did you have on that ship?

Mr. Guennel

It was excellent. We went on 2nd class; there were three classes. We paid for it.

Mr. Misenhimer

And you were about 14 or something like that?

Mr. Guennel

I was 13, yeah.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were the conditions like in Germany before you all left?

Mr. Guennel

I actually lived under the Hitler regime from January 30, 1933 to September 1934. I was pretty advanced for my age. I fully understood what was going on. I lived in an environment that was forced on us. At that time there was a great shortage of housing. We had no control, no choice of where we could live. The housing department of the city

dictated where and what you could live in. It was just my mom and I, but we were totally dependant on their decisions. We were in a two-room apartment and the two rooms were split by a hallway that led to another apartment. It was miserable living. With my dad's money from the States, the exchange rate was 4 to 1, we could afford better housing. I was never starving. We ate well. Only the housing conditions were poor. What a great revelation when I got to Bangor where my dad rented a duplex. I had my own room and there was a bathroom and we had a telephone, the whole works. I went wild.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that the conditions back in Germany were pretty bad back in the 20's.

Mr. Guennel

Well, yes, because of World War I and the inflation and the political upheaval. I experienced all that and, as I said, I was pretty much advanced and knew what was going on.

Mr. Misenhimer

I understand that inflation was bad after World War I that they would take a wheelbarrow load of marks to buy a loaf of bread.

Mr. Guennel

That's true, although I was too young to remember the height of the inflation. I was born in 1920. but from about five years on I remember things fairly well.

Mr. Misenhimer

I am just kind of curious about how things were over there and I'm not sure if this is a fair question or not, but were your parents in favor of the Hitler Regime or not?

Mr. Guennel

Well, my dad left in December of 1928 and lived two years in the States until 1930 and then 10 months later he was back in the States. During the 10 months in Germany he was lying pretty much flat on his back, expecting to die. He was pretty much out of things, wasn't concerned about politics. Until 1928 he was a laborer, belonged to the Metal Workers Union, was a Socialist, but not the extreme left, not a Communist. On the other hand, my mom and I lived in a house called the "red house" by the neighbors. There were 1-2-3-4-5 apartments. Three of them occupied by Communist families. They put the communist flags out on election days and other occasions. I grew up in that environment, the anti-Nazi environment.

In fact, I first heard of Dachau, the concentration camp, in 1933. A Catholic family with four or five kids lived in one two-room apartment downstairs. The father was a leader of the Red Fighters, the opponents of the Nazi Brownshirts. He was arrested right away, in February 1933, but was released before Christmas. One night my mom and I were asked to come down. They had taped the windows shut so that light would not escape and he showed us the welts and still festering wounds on his back where he had been beaten, whipped. His wife was still treating those wounds. The beatings were suffered at Dachau. That was the first time we heard that name, Dachau. That was my home environment. On the other hand, I went to that elite school of highly nationalistic, patriotic leanings. That was a whole different ballgame. My best friend was the son of a Lutheran minister, head of the biggest church in Stollberg where the school was located. From ten years on I had to take a train to go to school. My friend was a member of the "Jungvolk", the 10-13 year old branch of the Hitler youth, and his father gave sermons in

his brown-shirted Nazi uniform.

That was the kind of thing that I was exposed to; two opposing viewpoints and philosophies. I saw both sides, at home all communist, anti-Nazi, whereas in school all patriotic, nationalistic, pro-Nazi.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well he did a lot for the country back in those days to bring them out of their bad economic situation.

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, right, maybe. That's what a lot of people thought. But it led to the war and the destruction of the country.

Mr. Misenhimer

I wanted to get your personal experiences; you got into the States in 1934 and you started school here, what grade did you start in?

Mr. Guennel

Well, I started in the eighth grade.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you speak any English?

Mr. Guennel

Well, yeah, I had 3 ½ years of English but it was the British pronunciation and I had to get accustomed to the American sound. That took me about a week. I had pretty good vocabulary and could write it ok. Of course with my dad having been in this country, learning English was a big thing for me. So I excelled at it or at least put more effort into it than some of the other courses that I took.

Mr. Misenhimer

Of course you were expecting to move to the U.S. sometime or other.

Mr. Guennel

I was all enthused. But I thought I would have to ride a horse from New York City to Bangor. I had been reading those western novels for several years and my dad shows up in a car, a 1928 Hudson. (laughing)

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you have quite a bit of an adjustment to make to the U.S.?

Mr. Guennel

Well, it was a whole different world and I was all enthused about it. It was great. The living conditions and the whole thing was new. I loved it and adjusted quickly. There was never, in all my experiences in the States, that I ever personally felt any resentment or anti-German attitudes. I just never encountered them. I don't know if that was universal in regards to World War II in this country or not. I had heard that during World War I there had been an anti-German attitude similar to what we felt against the Japanese in World War II. Never once were there any disparaging remarks made against me at any time. I was accepted, there was no question about that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you living in an area with quite a few Germans, or not?

Mr. Guennel

No, no, I wanted to be an American.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, it wasn't a German neighborhood or anything like that?

Mr. Guennel

Oh, no. In Bangor, Pennsylvania there was only two other German families. Both were in the hosiery business and they were friends of my dad. It wasn't a German environment. And then, later on, in Indianapolis after high school, it was the same. We were not in a German neighborhood.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish school here?

Mr. Guennel

I graduated from High School in 1939. My dad had already left the year before, had gone to Indianapolis for a better job, I guess. But I only had one year left in high school and I was on the football team and the baseball team and I had a girlfriend. I wasn't going to leave. So, my mom and I stayed behind, again, but this time we weren't in Germany but in Bangor, PA. The next day after graduation in 1939, in May or early June, we had our car packed and we drove down to Indianapolis. I had never been west before. I didn't know anything about Indiana. Back east the colleges I probably would have done to were Lafayette, Lehigh, Muhlenberg or maybe Penn State or Temple. You know, the Pennsylvania schools. Suddenly I was in Indiana and I did want to go to college. I wanted to study art or forestry, wanted to become a forester ever since I was a kid in Oelsnitz. It just happened that only six blocks from us, south on 46th and we lived on 52nd street, my dad had rented a house for us in Indianapolis, there was a university, Butler. I went there, talk to the admissions people and was accepted. I started college there in the fall. I took four years of pre-forestry at Butler University.

Mr. Misenhimer

So, you graduated from there when?

Mr. Guennel

In 1943. Like most college guys I got caught up in then Pearl Harbor tragedy. I don't want to claim that it was all patriotism, not 100%. There was a draft and most of us tried to avoid being drafted, figuring we had some choice if we volunteered. Which wasn't really true. You know the Army. But that was our naive thinking. So, I enlisted in the Army Reserve in the summer of 1942. I was a junior and still had a year to go in college. We all wanted to fly. Nobody wants to walk in the war. I tried the Air Corps, at that time it was part of the Army, but they turned me down. They spun me around on a barber chair and I vomited. I used to vomit riding a bus when I was a kid. Then I tried the Navy flying and I was again turned down. So I ended up in the Army Reserve. Although it wasn't in writing at the recruiting office, it was practically promised that guys with only a year to go would be allowed to finish college. I was called to active duty about a week before commencement.

Mr. Misenhimer

You did not graduate then?

Mr. Guennel

Yes I did. They gave me a weekend pass and I went back for commencement with the gown over my uniform.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had your parents become American citizens by this time?

Mr. Guennel

My dad had in 1938 which made me a derivative citizen at the time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you a citizen by that time? You said derivative citizen, since your dad was a citizen?

Mr. Guennel

Well, I was already a citizen because my dad became a citizen in 38 and I graduated in 39, so I was already a citizen automatically. But, I got a certificate that says derivative citizenship with the date and all.

Mr. Misenhimer

So what date did you actually go in active duty?

Mr. Guennel

I think it was June the 15th, 1943. No, I think it was May the 28th. I'll check that date.

That is one thing that I am weak on, numbers. I think it was late in May when I was called up and then early June when I got a pass for graduation. I was already in the Army when I got my degree.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you take your basic training?

Mr. Guennel

I took my basic at Camp Wolters near Mineral Wells, Texas. Infantry Basic.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that? Tell me about that.

Mr. Guennel

For some reason or other, they made me a squad leader, acting that is. They gave me an

arm band with three stripes and there was an assistant squad leader with two stripes. We were all college guys, the whole battalion, and we set all kinds of records for infantry basic training. A few of us were college grads already; barely. I had just graduated, was already in the Army at commencement. At the end of basic, I was recommended for OCS at Fort Benning, Georgia. I had already gone through the hoops; chaplain, platoon Lt., Company captain and review board when a team of interviewers came through. They were interviewing for ASTP training. None of us had heard of it. It meant Army Specialized Training Program. Both the chaplain and my lieutenant thought it sounded pretty good and advised me to accept. Why risk the infantry? More infantry platoon lieutenants get killed than anybody else and you are going to get commissioned anyway when you finish that specialized training. I took their advice and ended up at the University of Missouri, in Columbia. ASTP offered curricula in Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry, Engineering and Area language. I was assigned to the latter program to learn Italian. It was fall and football season. I remember seeing the Missouri–Oklahoma game, which was a biggie in those days. That Columbia campus environment was a whole new deal. It was like night and day coming from the derst of Texas to the Eden that was Missouri.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you live in a dormitory there?

Mr. Guennel

We lived four to a room in the Sigma Nu House, a fraternity house. It was pretty good living. There were two women's colleges in Columbia and hardly any male students at the Univeristy. But, the whole ASTP program folded by April Fool's Day. My

certificate is dated 26 March, 1944. The Army needed replacements and shut the Army Specialized Training Program down. We all reverted to our previous classifications, which for me was infantry. I would guess that most of the ASTPers were absorbed by infantry units. I met some of my former buddies later on, some got killed. I too would have returned to infantry, but again I was saved by a team of interviewers. They were looking for guys to take Army intelligence training. I ended up at Camp Ritchie, Maryland which is now Camp David. I remember that Roosevelt's retreat was across the highway in Pennsylvania. It must have been in April when I started that intelligence training at Ritchie and I graduated on July 15, 1944. I remember how we followed and traced the Normandy invasion in our classes.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about what you studied there in that intelligence school.

Mr. Guennel

That was the most concentrated educational experience that I ever had. We were taught a variety of subjects, all the communication systems, Morse code, semaphore etc., history, geography, map reading and making, compass work, the Armies, British, German, Russian and Italian and everything was hurried, rushed, speeded up. It was education at double time.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was about three months, is that right?

Mr. Guennel

I would think so, but I forgot the exact time. My graduation certificate is dated July 13, 1944. I came out as an MOS 631. I guess that's the code name to designate prisoner

interrogation.

Mr. Misenhimer

The MOS 631?

Mr. Guennel

It meant non-commissioned interrogator, I guess. After Ritchie I was assigned to IPW Team 124. That was a six man team.

Mr. Misenhimer

IPW?

Mr. Guennel

That meant INTERROGATION, PRISONER OF WAR. And then we went to Camp Kilmer.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did you have then?

Mr. Guennel

By that time I think I was a T5. I was the low, low man on that totem pole. There were two officers, 2nd lieutenants; Ernie Hochstadt, who had already been commissioned in the Signal Corps and Jack Levy who was commissioned at Camp Ritchie. The other three members of the team were all sergeants. I was sure that I'd be commissioned at Ritchie. All the test results and class rankings were posted continually and I was second in my class. Nevertheless I ended up with a T-5.

Mr. Misenhimer

With you speaking German, did that help you get into that school?

Mr. Guennel

That's the reason I was there, to use my German and be trained as an interrogator. I never did use the Italian that they taught me at Missouri U. I never got to Italy during the war. At Ritchie we had a whole bunch of Italian POW's from the North African campaign. They did all the maintenance work, cleaning, cooking, etc. And they would play soccer every evening after supper after they cleaned up the kitchen, etc. I used to play with them, used my Italian on them. I've always suspected that some cadre guy, maybe a faculty member, blackballed me because I associated with those Italians. Who knows? I'm just talking off the top of my head.

IPW Team 124 was formed and we ended up at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. I guess it was called a repple depple, a camp for preparing us for going overseas. We had to wait for a convoy to be formed. I don't remember how long it took.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get seasick on the way over?

Mr. Guennel

Oh, all the way, all the time. I was miserable. Vomited and I was just sick, sicker than a dog. I was in the upper bunk in the lowest deck and I would try to hit my helmet that was swinging back and forth. Jesus, it was terrible. But I survived and we ended up in Scotland, at Greenock, the harbor in Glasgow. We spent some time in the Midlands, near Birmingham, in a place called Litchfield; a kind of American Army base. After a few weeks we crossed the Channel in an LST, landed at LeHavre, but sat there for a day or so waiting for mines to be cleared. From LeHavre we went to Paris, stayed in some minor palace; I remember swans and ponds and flower beds. In St. Germain for orientation and

issuing of equipment I remember getting an M-43, a kind of rapid fire sub-machine gun that was a cheap copy of the German Schmeisser as I found out later.

In Paris we joined a vehicle convoy to Epinal and from there, in a smaller convoy, went north to the front and joined the 44th infantry division at Sarrebourg. We were only attached to that outfit “for quarters and rations, not assigned”. Therefore we were never an integral part of the division. We were actually XV Corps personnel.

Mr. Misenhimer

About when would that have been; August or September?

Mr. Guennel

I think it was early November.

Mr. Misenhimer

What Army was that?

Mr. Guennel

It was the 7th army under General Patch; Alexander Patch. The 44th Infantry Division already had an interrogation team at division headquarters so that our team of six was divided into three two man teams that were sent to the three regiments of the division. I and the team C.O., Lt. Hochstadt, ended up with the 71st Regiment. We were with that unit all the way to Rhine and the city of Ludwigshafen. By that time it was March and I believe there had been two attacks by the Germans during that time. One was in November and we had to adjust our lines and the second was before Christmas when we again had to draw back and make adjustments, mainly because the Ardennes breakout and the attempt to retake Strasbourg by the Germans. During those defensive intervals the situation was static, mostly patrol activity at night. The December attacks by the

Germans was December 15, maybe the 16th.

Mr. Misenhimer

The Battle of the Bulge.

Mr. Guennel

Yes, it was the Battle of the Bulge, but in the north, whereas in the south there was also an attack, the attempt by the Germans to retake Strasbourg. We blunted that southern attack pretty well so that the guys were sitting in their foxholes day after day waiting for the Battle of the Bulge to be won.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you make it through that winter? I understand that it was awful cold winter.

Mr. Guennel

We had a jeep. We always managed to find shelter. In France whole villages had been evacuated. The houses and farms were empty except maybe for some chickens left behind. Often we slept in cellars or houses where the upper stories were gone. I never had to sleep in a foxhole except in basic training at Camp Wolters. More importantly, I never had to fire a weapon, not the M-3 that was issued to me in Paris, not the carbine that some platoon leader had traded me for that burp gun and not the 45 that another platoon leader gave me for that carbine.

Mr. Misenhimer

You weren't really involved in the Battle of the Bulge then?

Mr. Guennel

No. There was, as I mentioned, also an attack in the south to retake Strasbourg at the same time as the attack in the Ardennes.

Mr. Misenhimer

The 7th Army was on one of the edges of it?

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, right, we were way south so we really weren't affected by it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever interrogate any prisoners?

Mr. Guennel

Oh yes, it was our job, hundreds of them.

Mr. Misenhimer

How was that?

Mr. Guennel

Well, it was a real experience and we were well trained for it. Most of the time we were successful but there were a few frustrating sessions. One of the divisions we faced was the 17th SS, the "Götz von Berlichingen". Their officers were Nazi's, they were obstinate, cited the Geneva Convention, etc. On the other hand, their soldiers were almost gushingly cooperative, especially after the failed Ardennes attack, the so called Battle of the Bulge. Heck, by that time many of the SS troops hardly spoke German; they were Czechs, Slovaks, Yugoslavs who had been drafted into the Waffen SS.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were you able to get much information out of them?

Mr. Guennel

Oh yeah, I think we did extremely well. We followed the rules, even today I don't approve of threats or torture, physical or mental, and that is based on personal experience.

Rule one is: Don't ever paint yourself into a corner. The first experience we had when we joined the 44th division was to watch a spectacle, the interrogation of a German cavalry officer. No, not Calvary, he was an artillery captain. For several days he was shuttled back and forth from a jail cell by MP's. It was a daily show, with high ranking officers fascinated by the antics of the interrogator; shouting and threatening, even with the trench knife to the captain's throat. He even had to dig a grave in the jail yard, but to no avail. When that Prussian officer stood at that hole, shovel and pick at his side and handkerchiefs wrapped around his blistered hands and said in English "So, shoot me" the show was over and the game was lost. The thing is, you can't shoot a prisoner once he has been recorded, is documented and it is in the files and has a tag around his neck. You are then accountable; you'd be violating the Geneva Convention. Anyway, that was a great learning experience.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is there anytime that you think you got some real good information from one of them?

Mr. Guennel

Oh yeah, constantly, most of the time. I, myself, have a couple of reports that Ernie Hochstadt gave me, sort of souvenirs. He typed reports almost daily to the respective S-2s of the units we were attached to. Those reports must be in the archives. It was fascinating and rewarding; all the information we got from prisoners, from most of them. There were a few exceptions, some Waffenn-SS officer would cite the Geneva Convention and give us only "name, rank and serial number." We did have great advantages. For one thing, the German Army was disintegrating and the other was that the interrogator knew quite a bit about each prisoner. The German soldier carried his

Soldbuch, his pay book, basically his service record with him. We'd study the guy's booklet before asking that first question. Moreover, the POW was brainwashed, he doesn't know what to expect, he has heard of POWs having been shot. So, he comes out of a foxhole cold and miserable and hasn't had any decent hot food in days, maybe weeks. We offer him a cigarette and a cup of hot coffee and let him get warm by a hot stove in some house. You treat the guy like a human being and he responds; he wants to please you. That's the method to use, that's the method that got us results. They cooperate and tell you what you want to know.

Mr. Misenhimer

What they think you want to know.

Mr. Guennel

Sure. But that's why you never ask leading questions, you let him tell you. Also, you have previous information that you can check against. So you learn through it all. It was a great experience. Yet, and I am jumping way ahead, the greatest and probably the most rewarding interrogation came later, after the war at the 7th Army Interrogation Center where we had Nazi bigwigs and field marshals and generals. But that is another story for later.

We are now at the Rhine River, in Ludwigshafen, with the 44th Infantry Division. The division is pulled back, to Nancy for R&R. Having been only attached to that division, we were actually XV Corps personnel, our team of six was sent north a few miles to Worms where we joined the 3rd Infantry Division. We crossed the Rhine under artificial fog early in the morning, 4 or 5 o'clock, on a pontoon bridge with the 3rd Division. Again, the same thing happened. The 3rd already had an IPW team at division HQ so that

we, our 6 man team, were attached to the regiments. Hochstadt and I spent most of our time with the 15th Regiment. There was also the 7th and, hell, I forgot the other regiment. Oh yeah, it was the 30th. After crossing the Rhine, we moved northeast. We were headed for Berlin. We got up as far as Bad Kissingen when, all of the sudden, we were stopped and swung southeast. The 3rd Army, Patton's, which had been to our left, did the same thing. They ended up in Czechoslovakia and we ended up in Salzburg, Austria. And that is how we got to Berchtesgaden, which is close by.

During the journey we still did some interrogating, but by about April there wasn't any sense in doing it. The German Army was surrendering all over the place. Our main job from then on was to post Eisenhower proclamations in every town and village in the regimental sector. We had a pot of paste and bundles of those large sheets that we pasted on kiosks, billboards and walls on and around city halls and squares. We would appoint a mayor and police chief and a fire chief in each town and tell them to collect all the weapons, pile them up and someone would come by with trucks and pick them up. As we swept through villages and towns, that was our main job. Sometimes we were asked to interpret for some Colonel who was taking a town or village or when some German unit wanted to surrender.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your Lieutenant spoke German also, right?

Mr. Guennel

Oh, yeah, he was born in Vienna. He became my best buddy, my best friend.

Mr. Misenhimer

Is he still living?

Mr. Guennel

No, he died last year. Sadly enough. Great, great guy. His son is a well known Historian, taught at Bates College in Maine and is now teaching at some college in Illinois. I can't think of the name right now. His name is Steve Hochstadt and he has written some books. His father's name was Ernest. So now the war ends on the 7th, or I guess it was the 8th of May. As I said, near the end there wasn't anything for us to do. We were a tolerated nuisance to the G-2 of the 3rd Division. They still had to feed us; we were still attached to the Division "for quarters and rations". So we sort of went sightseeing, took some trips. We didn't know when the war was going to end. We had gone to Dachau and had taken in Salzburg, the castle, the Mozarteum, etc. We had no business in Salzburg or Dachau. It was the 45th Division's job to take Dachau, not the 3rd's.

Mr. Misenhimer

Tell me about going there?

Mr. Guennel

That was on May the 2nd, the camp was liberated on April the 29th. So, we are talking three days later. It was quite an experience. It was unbelievable, you can't fathom it, your mind goes blank and.....you want to avenge those crimes, you want to retaliate, you want to punish somebody.

Mr. Misenhimer

Were there still a lot of prisoners in there when you arrived?

Mr. Guennel

Oh yeah, but they couldn't leave because of contagious diseases. Inmates were dying at twice the rate after liberation than before, according to the records left behind by the SS.

It was terrible. I have some photos. When we were there, some townspeople had been recruited to fish the dead SS guards out of the moat and toss them along the fence. But that is a story by itself. Those dead guards, it turned out, were SS alright but Norwegian Waffen-SS who had been assigned to guard that damn camp during the last few days. The regular SS guards had taken off. Of course we didn't know that in 1945.

Mr. Misenhimer

Who had killed them?

Mr. Guennel

It was really something, it was just horrible. There were bodies, corpses inside the freight cars and outside along the track. It had snowed the day before. And then the camp itself. In front of the crematorium, that room was stacked from floor to ceiling with bodies, corpses piled up like wood. Unbelievable! The smell of it, the stench, it was terrible!

Mr. Misenhimer

The guards, who had killed the guards that were in the moat?

Mr. Guennel

They had been shot by our troops. There's a whole story involved. The C.O. of the battalion, the 1st Bn of the 157th Regiment of the 45th Division was Lt. Colonel Sparks, who later on become Brigadier General Sparks, Commander of the Colorado National Guard. The 157th was a Colorado National Guard unit alongside Oklahoma Regiments of the 45th, which became famous as the Thunderbird Division. Sparks died a few years ago and there is an Armory named after him. In April 1945, Sparks' battalion was ordered to liberate Dachau and its infamous concentration camp. One of his lieutenants simply went berserk, lost it and mowed down the surrendering SS guards as they were coming down

from those guard towers. Sparks stopped the massacre. I would have done the same thing as that lieutenant. I would have shot anyone who was responsible for that hellhole.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yeah, when you saw the conditions there.

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, you just go nuts, you just can't fathom, and your mind can't handle it. You just want to get even, you want to punish somebody for those crimes, and you want revenge. And that is what happened to that young lieutenant. I, myself, wouldn't touch any of this past until a few years ago when a buddy, Herman Freudenberger, told me that he had been back with his son's family and had revisited Dachau. Herman is Jewish, as were the other four members of the IPW Team 124. Herman is a professor emeritus at Tulane and lives near his son in Austin, Texas.

I said to myself "Hell, if he can do it being Jewish and having been on one of those Kinder transports to escape the Nazi's and losing his stepmother at Auschwitz, I can do it." But, I wish I hadn't done it. It tore me up again. I lost it, made a fool of myself. I just broke down and cried like a baby in that damn place when I gave them my photos and some intelligence reports they hadn't seen.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year was that?

Mr. Guennel

Just a few years ago. (GKG: It was on April 19, 2001. I looked it up) Anyway, we got to Dachau and a couple days later we went to Berchtesgaden, which we also had no business doing. But, like I said, we were done interrogating, we had nothing to do, and

we were on our own. When we finally reported back to Division G-2 we were reprimanded and told that we, IPW Team 124, had orders to report to 7th Army Interrogation Center in Augsburg. We took off with out two jeeps and a trailer, the six of us, and headed for Augsburg. We stopped on the outskirts of that city at an inn. We were surprised when the old inn keeper hugged us instead of leery of American soldiers. He had heard on BBC that the damn war ended that morning. We had no radio, had been on the road all day. The next morning we reported to the 7th Army Interrogation Center where later on we encountered those big time prisoners like Göring. I remember quite a bunch of them and interrogated some. But, that is another experience, another chapter.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, tell me about it.

Mr. Guennel

Well, with Göring, I guess that was a biggest thing. It was early in May and he still was under the impression, as was all German generals, that they would join us and fight with us against the Russians, the Bolsheviks. Also, Göring considered himself to be the heir apparent of Hitler, that he had a contract; Hitler's testament of 1941 or 1942 that appointed him to replace Hitler should the fuehrer die. Although he was arrested by the SS and disowned by Hitler at the end, he thought he was to be the leader of Germany. It was his Luftwaffe troops in Berchtesgaden who rescued him from the SS and made him a free man until he surrendered to us and ended up at the 7th Army Interrogation Center in Augsburg where he talked freely and disparagingly about the other Nazi bigwigs, like Goebbels and Himmler and especially Bormann. He had been put, along with his adjutant and several other members of his staff, in a single family cottage. That house

was bugged, even the toilets. Every sound made in that house was recorded. We had recording equipment in trucks that was monitored 24 hours a day. Then, on a sunny Sunday in May we had him sit outside in front of the cottage, under a beach umbrella, and fed him a chicken dinner and had invited the media. When Ike heard about it and saw pictures in the papers, he blew his stack. Ike didn't know why we were feeding that war criminal chicken and treating him like the celebrity the fat man thought he was.

Göring was shipped to Luxembourg, the so called Ashcan, where potential war criminals were being readied for the Nuremberg Trials. There were many other bigwig potentials at Augsburg. I remember field marshals Von Leeb, Von Rundstedt and "Smiling Al" Kesslerling. I remember those three, they were the highest ranking military people, and there was Sepp Dietrich, the highest ranking SS General who had started out as Hitler's body guard and had become a general of whole armies of 300 to 600 thousand men. And there was Frick and Ley and Schirach and, oh yeah, Skorzeny. Frick and Skorzeny I interrogated briefly, to question them about specific times and events. Like Frick in Czechoslovakia and Skorzeny in France during the Battle of the Bulge. I also interrogated Waffen-SS general Gille, commander of the Viking Corps. He was a problem. When I was at Dachau on May 2, 1945 and saw those stiff bodies being hauled out of the water, that those SS guards had their arms up when they died, I didn't realize the significance, or didn't pay attention, at the time.

But, when I gave my pictures at the Dachau Museum in 2001, I was told that there had been a court martial, a trial of some sort, of the American troops who shot those SS guards. When I interrogated Gille in 1945, he kept harping about his innocent Norwegians getting shot after they had surrendered. My assignment was preliminary

interrogation which meant that I would check his folder in the orderly room for letter, paybook, etc on a clipboard and would write a summary of his life. I knew that he was Gille, had commanded the Viking Corps on the Russian front, but he wouldn't cooperate. He kept changing the subject to his Norwegians, accusing us of violating the Geneva Convention, of killing his poor Norwegian kids. I didn't see the connection until 50-60 years later, that those kids, his soldiers had been guards at Dachau. It still puzzles me; how did Gille, as commander of an SS Corps and in the southern Bavaria at the time, get orders to send troops to Dachau, to guard that concentration camp? Who could have given him the orders? It could not have been Himmler, who was up north by Luneburg where he ended up in British custody. Who then in the SS had higher rank than Gille to order Gille to send his Norwegians to Dachau? Or, did he get the orders from an Army commander, not from the SS chain of command? But, the regular Army, Wehrmacht/Heer under Keitel/Jodl, had nothing to do with concentration camps. Anyway, I can understand why Gille was complaining to me about his poor Norwegians. True, they had nothing to do with the camp itself, they were just sent there to guard it at the end. It was the "Totenkopf" Division of the SS that provided the guards for the concentration camps and they had taken off.

Back to Augsburg once more. I just remembered that I interrogated two mistresses, Himmler's and Ley's, and that I also interrogated the highest ranking woman, Frau Scholtz-Klink, who headed the "Frauenshaft", the women's branch of the Nazi party, as well as the German Red Cross and the women's branch of the "Arbeitsdienst", the labor Service.

I also remember interrogating a bunch of Hungarians, cabinet members of the Budapest

city council. They had been interned at Ravensbruck Concentration camp. I had violated the rules by giving them paper and pencils to write down their experiences at Ravensbruck and how camp functioned, how the Capo system worked, etc. I would go back and check their work. Their report surely must be in the archives of the 7th Army Interrogation Center. My main job, however, was to write short, preliminary reports, preferably one page summaries of prisoners' lives. Who he was, where he had been, what he had done? Had he been on the Russian front? When? Could he have been involved in war crimes?

Probably my most important interrogation was of Gehlen. We had no idea who he was and besides he was only a General Major, a brigadier. Heck, we had field marshals and famous general, like Guderian and Sepp Dietrich to interrogate. General Gehlen, I remember, that he and a couple of his officers were kept in one of those small apartments, four men to an apartment, and that his troops, maybe 20 or more were up in the attic. They were all Russian speaking Baltics, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians and they had arrived in three trucks, I believe. They had tight tarps to cover what Gehlen claimed were the intelligence records for the entire eastern front. He bragged that he knew the production figures of all the factories in the Soviet Union. How many tanks, how many planes, etc. etc. I also remember that it was a hot day when I went upstairs to that loft of those sweaty, smelly, filthy Baltics. I do believe that they were shipped out to a regular POW camp the next day. In my prelim report on Gehlen, I did recommend that he be sent to some higher echelon for specialized interrogation. I have to admit that I didn't think that his Russian information was important. After all, we were grateful allies of the Russians at that time, a few weeks after VE day. It did turn out the Gehlen later became

the intelligence chief of the West German government. In 1945 he was just another German General Major, equivalent to a lowly Brigadier and they were a dime a dozen. I also interrogated an engineering general, a fellow named Henrici. And there were others, I'm sure, that I don't recall right now. I do remember interrogating the head of all the student organizations, Scheele was his name, if I remember correctly. He also had been Gauleiter of Salzburg to my surprise. I had never heard of him. He was a younger Nazi generation.

That was quite an experience, interrogating those people. Oh yeah, I also got to know Willy Messerschmitt, although not as an interrogator. As I said before, there were four prisoners in an apartment. Besides Messerschmitt, there was an admiral and some "Staatssekretar", who was the chief accountant of the Nazi Party Headquarters. I don't remember their names. And there was a Dr. Falko Lainer, an Austrian, who had been Ribbentrop's doctor. It was through Lainer that I got to know Messerschmitt. I had twisted my knee playing baseball; I had started a baseball team in addition to my soccer team; and Herman the Dutchman, who was on my soccer team, and headed the DP crew (displaced persons) that fed the prisoners their twice daily rations, either "C" or "K" told me about that doctor.

Everyday I took talcum powder and Lainer massaged my knee. It was during these sessions that I got to know the other three guys in that apartment. For example, I remember that accountant telling me that every stamp had Hitler's picture on it and that royalties were paid on every stamp and that the money went to the Nazi party general fund that was controlled by Bormann and that millions were divided into private accounts. I also remember Messerschmitt's birthday. I always thought that it was his 50th, but it had

to have been his 47th since he celebrated his 80th in 1978. I don't remember when he died. I had brought a bottle of wine and the three roommates had melted the wax off "K" ration wrappings and carved a chess set. Shortly thereafter I violated the rules again by bringing him paper and pencils and a slide rule. His roommates thought he was losing it, that he was going insane. Apparently the paper and pencil and slide rule didn't help. After Augsburg, we and our prisoners were housed in a Wehrmacht Kaserne, WWII vintage, in Seckenheim, near Mannheim. I got him transferred to a German hospital. We had an agreement with the hospital in Wiesloch, south of Heidelberg. I had already sent General Henrici there for diabetic and intestinal problems. Wiesloch had been an infamous insane asylum where undesirables were euthanized. After the war it handled regular patients. The treatment at Wiesloch must have helped. Messerschmitt did get well and big again in Germany. He started with motorcycles and then three wheeled cars and on and on. I wasn't assigned to interrogate him. I don't know who his interrogator was. Maybe he wasn't officially interrogated. Everybody knew who he was and what he did. I just got to know him because of my twisted knee.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was he involved with the airplanes?

Mr. Guennel

Well, yeah, he had his name on those planes including the jet plane that I saw near Roseneim, the single pilot jet. He developed and built it.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was the ME262, that was one of them.

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, whatever it was called, I forget. I remember seeing it, it was the most incongruous thing I ever saw. Here we are on the autobahn and the median strip is concrete, painted green to make it look like grass. And over on the side, under the trees with camouflage netting sit those little jet airplanes. We'd never seen a jet plane before. The most awesome cutting edge military instrument on the side of the road and down the median strip meanders a Hungarian Division. The general and several officers are riding on horses and then a caravan is strung out behind them with pushcarts and animal cages and horse drawn wagons and sheep, goats, even pigeons and chickens scurrying and being herded along that super highway. What a motley crew, a primitive army and ultra modern jets! Unreal, unbelievable! The Hungarians were heading for Munich and we were heading toward Salzburg, Austria.

Well, where are we? Oh, ok....interrogating prisoners. So, the 7th Army Interrogation Center was closed and we and our prisoners, we are in our jeeps and they in box cars, moved to Seckenheim, a town on the Neckar River close to Mannheim and Heidelberg. The new interrogation center must have been a higher echelon than Army. We were going from 7th Army and were joined by interrogators from 3rd Army, Patton's Army. We were probably under Bradley's command but never knew it. By that time we had pretty much weeded out all the potential war criminals. They were all up in Luxembourg being readied for the Nuremberg Trials.

We pretty much knew all about the prisoners we still had, knew who they were and where they had been. There wasn't much to do. Then the monotony was interrupted, albeit briefly, by an interviewing team from Nuremberg. I don't remember their names,

but one was a full colonel and there were a couple other officers who interviewed a bunch of us. They were looking for help, they were desperate. It must have been late September or early October of 1945 and they were under great pressure to the trials started. They faced another problem. Not many of us interrogators were interested in staying longer. By that time all the married guys wanted to go home and most of us single guys also had enough of Europs. Anyway, they did find and selected four of us, two officers and two noncoms. Surprisingly, the two officers, Captain Rudy Urbach and Lieutenant Jack Levy, were married men but willing to make the sacrifice of returning to Germany and participate in the trials. Jack, by the way, was second in command in our IPW Team 124 and I think he was still a second Looney. Bill Slater, who was on my soccer team, and I were the enlisted men chosen. We, the four of us, were told to be in Nuremberg the next morning. It was already evening that Saturday, so we were to report Sunday morning. We got up at 5 o'clock and got to Nuremberg at nine or so. Road conditions were poor, there were many detours with the roads themselves and the bridges destroyed. We spent all day. We were interviewed and took written tests and they showed us rooms filled with boxes of documents from floor to ceiling.

All that stuff had to be organized and inventoried just to see what the hell they had. They were separate and they needed help badly. By late afternoon, and again I don't remember who those people were, the Army officers and civilians had decided that Captain Urbach and Jack Levy would work on the documents and that Bill Slater and I were to be court interpreters. They told us that orders were being cut and that we were to be back the next day, Monday. We arrived fairly late that Sunday night and lo and behold a delegation of three or four officers, led by a bird colonel were waiting for us. They had flown in from

London. They represented Army intelligence and its chief, a general Rothschild. I think that was the name mentioned. They told us to forget Nuremberg and that our orders were cancelled, that Army Intelligence had higher priority. How ridiculous! We weren't doing anything and the Nuremberg people were desperate, needed us. The Army, at least its intelligence branch, was playing games. Subsequently, what made it even more hurtful, what added salt to our wounds, was our reception at Oberursel. The Seckenheim interrogation center was closed and we were sent to Oberursel, northwest of Frankfurt, and were under Eisenhower.

There was nothing to do, no interrogation were needed or very rarely requested. At the welcoming meeting the colonel in charge asked us whether anybody had experience in entertainment and my buddy, Bill Slater who would have been at Nuremberg, raised his hand. He was given a British made Chrysler, the steering wheel was on the right side, to scour the neighboring villages for liquor and bands and entertainers. I, having had four years of pre-forestry, was put in charge of landscaping. I remember that I had prisoners paint all the rocks that lined the walks and the road a glistening white.

I, too, should have been in Nuremberg where I was needed and could have done real service, served my country in a worthwhile cause. But that's the Army for you.

There was a point system and at the end of December I had enough points to be sent home for discharge. But I had met a German girl that I wanted to marry. Girl isn't the right term, hell, we were both 24 years old and we both felt the same way. I had been engaged before going overseas but had received a "Dear John" letter on my birthday, Dec 24 in 1944. I had met Hilde in Heidelberg and she had lost her boyfriend and only brother on the Russian front. But again, that evil --, we couldn't get married because of

Eisenhower's stupid non-fraternization edict. I could have married anyone, Polish, French, Italian, Dutch women but not a German. So, instead of going home like all those other GIs did, and I am an only son, I decide to take a job with Military Government in Karlsruhe as a civilian employee of the War Department. I was discharged on January 15 at Hochst, Eisenhower's headquarters and then moved to Karlsruhe which was the capital of the State of Baden. I was the intelligence officer who had to investigate and approve people for jobs in the media fields of Press, Publications, Film, Radio and Theatre in a five county area. There were no radio stations and no movie studios, only movie theatres that had to be licensed. Karlsruhe had a state theatre so that all the actors, singers, musicians had to be screened. One thing that I'm kinda proud of is that all the newspapers that we, the Information Control Division people, started are still going strong. Germany never had a truly free press before and nobody is aware that such papers as the Munich "Suddeutsche Zeitung", the Heidelberg "Rhein-Neckar Zeitung", the "Mannheimer Morgen" and the Karlsruhe "Badische Neueste Nachrichten" were started and licensed by us. We must have done something right.

I had signed only a six month contract thinking the non-fraternization edict would be lifted. I was wrong. I signed up for a year then and we finally did get married on August 8, 1947. We were married 58 years when Hilde died three years ago in March 2006. It must have been the right decision back in 1945. However, it didn't make my mom very happy when her only son didn't come home after the war ended like all the other guys did. It was through Eleanor Roosevelt's efforts, her weekly newspaper column and her political activism that the non-fraternization silliness was stopped. It never made any sense. If you are going to rebuild a country, you've got to talk to the people, deal with

them. Even after the ban was lifted, the Army tried to stonewall marriages to Germans. Although I was affected by the unwritten policy, I favored it, understood it. Eighteen year old kids who had never had a drink were thrust into a chaotic post-war Germany, where a pack of cigarettes could buy sex and those innocent American kids wanted to marry those prostitutes. The Army set up hurdles, made it tough to marry Germans. I got caught up in this process and had to go through all those hoops. Hilde, my wife to be, had lost all the documents when her parents apartment was destroyed in one of the many bombing attacks that Mannheim suffered. Her mother scoured churches and municipal agencies to obtain certified duplicates. As I recall the situation, the Army was rather successful that only one in 10 application for marriage were ever completed.

So we finally got married in Karslrhue on August 8th, 1947. My contract had already run out, but the Army had to pay until I hit American shores. I left for the States a couple days later on some British Mediterranean cruise ship that had been converted to a troop ship and we had good weather, didn't even get seasick once, and in had a cabin that I shared with Judge Hartridge of the Karlsruhe Military Government who was going to Florida on leave. Hilde followed me via the SS. Richardson, an Army troopship, in October. I remember it was World Series time, a subway series between the Yankees and Dodgers. I drove to Staten Island in my dad's Nash from Indianapolis after the Red Cross had notified me that my wife was arriving the next morning. The telegram that Hilde sent and paid for in Bremerhaven never got to me.

So we started our life together in Indianapolis. It wasn't easy for her, being in a strange country, having left her parents and siblings behind and speaking little English. The fact that my mom blamed her for keeping me in Germany when all the other GIs had come

home didn't help matters. And I had that bad knee. Are you interested in the rest or just Army stuff?

Mr. Misenhimer

Sure! No, no go ahead.

Mr. Guennel

I still had that bad knee. I had hoped to get it operated on while still in the Army but time had run out on me. While in Karlsruhe I almost got it done. I had been hobbling around, trying to play tennis on the only tennis court that wasn't war damaged. It was at the Technical University, a kind of MIT. The chairman of the PE department was a Dr. Zimmermann. He had obtained tennis racquets for me and he and a Dr. Schwarzkopf used to play doubles against me and Walter Leeds, the denazification officer.

Schwarzkopf worked at the hospital and a famous orthopedic surgeon who had done many ski and soccer knees was ready to operate on me. Oh yeah, while introducing that surgeon to me, I had invited them, the surgeon, Schwarzkopf and Zimmermann for lunch and Schwarzkopf asked me where I came from in the States. I told him Indiana. Indiana? Any chance that I knew a Charles Reimer? Of course. Charlie and I had been taking botany courses at Butler. What a coincidence.

Charlie had been with the 44th Division in Lorraine on night patrol with the I&R (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) platoon when he was hit by machine gun fire. He was picked up by a German patrol when he shouted "Hilfe, Hilfe." The German sergeant pulled out his Luger when he saw that Charlie was an American in the light of an aid station. A nurse stepped in front of that sergeant and cited the Geneva Convention and saved Charlie's life. Charlie ended up in a German hospital in Baden Baden where

Schwarzkopf was a doctor. The German doctors operated on Charlie's arm, even had blood transfused to him directly from a German soldier. Schwarzkopf kept Charlie in the hospital instead of shipping him to a regular POW camp, until the French arrived. Charlie eventually went back to Butler to get a masters degree and I met Charlie again in 1947 when I came back to Indianapolis. Charlie then got a Ph.D. from Michigan State and I went to Indiana for a Ph.D. Charlie died last year and I'm still alive at 88.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you get your PhD in?

Mr. Guennel

The thing was that 4 years of pre-forestry and that I finally had my knee operated on. The deal with the German doctor operating on my knee fell through because the Surgeon General's office in Frankfurt, Eisenhower's headquarters, wouldn't approve it. Then at the VA hospital at Ft. Benjamin Harrison, where I had been inducted in 1943, an orthopedic surgeon botched the operation. I spent three months in that hospital. When we had a surgeon, who happened to be from Colorado, asked me what I wanted to do and I told him that I had taken pre-forestry he told me that I could not handle such strenuous outdoor work. What to do with all that botany and stuff? Maybe teaching would be the answer. I got on the GI bill and took a couple of education courses which turned me off. The courses, high school and secondary education, followed each other and were identical and used the same text and the same teacher. A nice guy, a principal from Martinsville. Ridiculous! So, I ruled out high school teaching. I decided to go for a master's in botany. I got the degree in 1949 and had a fellowship lined up at Illinois for my PhD. But, Dr. Charles Deiss, who was chairman of the Indiana

University geology department and director of the Indiana Geological Survey, intervened and talked me out of it. He was rebuilding the Survey and wanted me to establish a palynology lab at the University in Bloomington and the PhD I could get within five years while doing full time research. It took me ten. I got that degree in 1960 in botany based on a comparative study of two paper coals, one from Tula, Russia and the other from Indiana.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you move to Colorado?

Mr. Guennel

I had never been that far west before when the annual meetings of the GSA (Geological Society of America) were scheduled for Denver in 1959. I thought it was stupid to hold meetings in November in Denver. Denver sounded like Minnesota or Siberia to me. I was driving an Indiana State car, we were five Survey people, when we hit a blizzard in Kansas and had to pull and push the Chevy out of a ditch, back onto US 40. We got our cheap hotel early in the morning. We were on seven dollars per diem; couldn't afford the Hilton where the meetings were held. Sunshine and blue skies and white peaks greeted us when we went for breakfast. Unreal! People were walking around without coats, in shirt sleeves. That night I called Hilde and off the top of my head said "you ought to see this place. Some day we are going to live here." Six months later I got a call from Ohio Oil Company asking me whether I be interested in setting up a palynology lab at their research center in Littleton, Colorado. I didn't need a job, I was satisfied. I had gotten my PhD and had published a whole bunch of papers. I had never heard of Ohio Oil. I didn't know that Marathon gasoline was their product. I was bowling for a Marathon

sponsored team, wore a Marathon bowling shirt. Anyway, they flew me to Findlay, OH for an interview and I accepted the challenge. I had some commitments in Europe, some international meetings and couldn't move to Colorado until June 15, 1961.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me go back and ask you some questions here. Did you get home from WWII with any souvenirs?

Mr. Guennel

Did I get any souvenirs? You mean German stuff?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, anything.

Mr. Guennel

Let me explain a little bit. We were only attached to the infantry divisions, never an integral part of those organizations. We were not in their automatic supply line, we had to fend for ourselves to get rations, gasoline, etc. Souvenirs were our currency. We had access to German medals, insignias, etc. As POW's they didn't need that hardware anymore. The most grotesque example of the importance of souvenirs to us is a trade we made for a jeep. It must have been in December of 1944 in Lorraine. I had been forced off the road by a tank that was avoiding a Teller mine and I hit a tree, damaged the radiator. Relatively minor repairs, but no replacement available. The motor pool sergeant suggested a depot back in Nancy. The colonel in charge of a vast array of trucks, tanks, jeeps, artillery even, wanted an SS dagger. This was France, we didn't have one but we did have a SA dagger, the brown one. After hours of haggling and sharing the colonel's liquor he ordered the plasmoline cover be ripped off a jeep and we drove off.

For a SA dagger and assorted medals, iron crosses, etc, we had a new jeep. C'est la guerre.

I did have a collection of pistols, Lugers, Berrettas, P38's, etc. And I also had two collections of all sorts of daggers, one for myself and the other for Lt. Hochstadt. I had those daggers crated and shipped back to the States before I left in August 1947. The daggers never arrived and the pistols I left with Captain Shults, the Public Safety officer of the Karlsruhe Military Government. With two jeeps and a trailer we could transport stuff, whereas the regular infantry soldier had to carry all his belongings on his back. Whenever a squad of infantry rested along the road, there'd be discarded souvenirs. Musical instruments mostly. I did hear that German weapons, rifles mostly, were disassembled and mailed home.

In Karlsruhe, I was in charge of collecting all the Nazi books that were then pulped so that new books, especially school books, could be published. I had my people pick out one clean copy of each item and I had three, maybe four wooden crates made for shipping these books home. I was going to donate them to Butler University. I was afraid that we might be too efficient so that some of the Nazi era publications might be eliminated completely, that we'd never know that they had existed. I figured that that literature would surely be useful in later research and that later generations would learn from those writings. The crates and their books never arrived. If the postal service or U.S. customs had been involved, I would have expected them to at least contact me. I suspect that the Amry shipping people, many of whom were left behind DPs (displaced persons) who didn't return to their countries after the war. There were underground and black markets for everything at that time.

Back to the souvenirs. I did get a Nazi flag at some party headquarters in some town. I also had medals and insignia and armbands, like "Das Reich", "Totenkopf" and "Deutschland" and so on. I got rid of all that stuff a few years ago. MY wife was rather sensitive. After all her brother was killed on the Russian front and is buried in a Germany Military cemetery in Vyasma. A guy by the name of Swearingen got the stuff. I believe he is a historian and has published books on World War II. I still have an officer's compass and a small plaque from Hitler's compound that some soldier must have picked up in Greece or Crete and hung on the wall of the SS Centine. There was still some snow on the Obersalzberg. We got a wooden sled, the ancestor to the luge of the olympics on which we loaded a dozen or so bottles of wine that we liberated from those huge storage cellars. We wanted to celebrate the end of the war with Hitler's wines. We had to haul that sled with its precious cargo down that mountain, over a high fence to our jeeps. We had driven the jeeps into the woods and camouflaged them with pine branches and chained the steering wheel to trees. We had encountered the French 2nd Armored once before in Lorraine. This isn't meant to be derogatory, I'm merely stating the facts. The French 2nd Armored was, in a way, like our Team 124 needed, accepted and tolerated but not fully controlled and supported. The French wore American uniforms, had American tanks and equipment but they were not in the regular supply loop; they had to fend for themselves. Therefore, we were alerted and warned to protect our equipment, especially jeeps, whenever the French were in our area.

On the way up to the redoubt area we had encountered a row of wooden barracks that housed Norwegians, who did the maintenance work for the enclave. Two of them volunteered as our guides. They showed us the "Berghof", Hitler's house and Göring

and Borman's and they also got us that wooden sled. They also showed us the hotel "Platterhof" and the entrance to the elevator that led to the so called Eagles Nest, which was merely a restaurant for afternoon teas and a gorgeous view of mountain peaks. The elevator didn't work, of course. The British bombed the place a few days before. We didn't go over to the teahouse, too much snow and it was getting late. Oh, I almost forgot, I did get a blanket sized bath towel out of Hitler's bathroom. My wife used it as a mattress cover for 50 years.

Only the front of Hitler's house was damaged. That large veranda had separated from the house. His desk and some furniture had slid out onto the concrete rubble and papers were scattered all over.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now, back on December 7th of 41, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Do you recall hearing about that?

Mr. Guennel

Oh yeah, sure. I remember that it was a Sunday.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you when you heard it?

Mr. Guennel

I was in Indianapolis.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how did you think that would effect you?

Mr. Guennel

I'll tell you. Let me go back to 1939. Remember I said that I graduated from Bangor

High and had left for Indianapolis the next day and that I had a girlfriend who was one of the main reasons for me to stay in Bangor to finish school. Well, just before starting college that fall I went back to Bangor to see her. She still had a year to go; she was starting her senior year of high school. As young people are prone to do, we drove to one of the abandoned slate quarries. I turned the radio on for the news. It was September 1, 1939 and Germany had invaded Poland that morning.

Mr. Misenhimer

September 1st of 1939, right.

Mr. Guennel

I was stunned, in didn't want to believe it. I said " Madeline, this is the end of Germany". I saw the manufacturing potential of this vaast country. Almost every family owned a car, had a telephone, etc. In Germany we had no phone. I had to go to a store to use the telephone when I was preparing trips to Berlin and Bremerhaven. There was no way that Germany could win a war against the U.S. I knew the U.S. would get involved eventually.

Then the Japs hit Pearl Harbor. That did it. Up untiln then we were only partially involved. Meetings between Roosevelt and Churchill, lend lease, etc and feeling sorry for England. And with Lindbergh and a formidable isolationist block there was a strong attitude of "staying out of other countries fights". Pearl Harbor changed all of that.

There was a mad rush by young people to enlist. When Germany declared war on us, that clinched it. Everybody was now involved, there was a distinct enemy. The first evil Axis. After the draft started there was a rush to join the military voluntarily to avoid being drafted. It wasn't all patriotism. Everybody thinks of himself. We figured we'd

had choices if we volunteered.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever see any USO shows anytime?

Mr. Guennel

When I was at Camp Wolters for basic, there was a USO outfit in..... It was a larger city, can't think of the name right now. But it was off limits for us, the infantry. We could go to Mineral Wells, but I don't remember a USA facility there.

Mr. Misenhimer

Wichita Falls?

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, Wichita Falls was the name. We couldn't go there because there were constantly fights between the air corps guys and the army, the Camp Wolters guys. So, they put Wichita Falls off limits.

Where else did I see a USO facility? Oh yeah, I remember one at Stratford where I had gone on a Sunday while in was at Litchfield, but that was about all. USO shows? I never saw one. I did come close twice. I think Hilde told me that she saw the Bob Hope show in Heidelberg. She remembered that fellow with the bulging eyes. Jerry Colonna, I told her. The room that she was renting was part of a large apartment that connected via a door to the movie house next door. The Hope show was held in that movie theatre and it was probably before I moved from Augsburg to Seckenheim. And the in the 44th Division WWII history volume I saw that Marlene Dietrich show had entertained the troops in Herbitzheim, but that must have been later than when I was in Herbitzheim. I have a sketch that I made of Herbitzheim dated January 1, 1945.

The only Red Cross girls I encountered overseas were at XV Corps Headquarters, in Frenetrage, France. Freudenberger and I had driven back to Corps to get our pay. A strange thing happened. We were strafed by an American plane. Was there a P-38?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, an airplane.

Mr. Guennel

No questio, it was an American plane that suddenly swooped down and strafed us. We were on chaussee, a raised road both sides dropping off into fields and both sides lined with trees. I slammed on the brakes and we dove out into that right side ditch. He missed us, even missed the jeep. Only knocked some branches down. When we got to Fenetrage there was chaos. Corps was in the "Adolf Hitler" school, which was surrounded by a wall and MPs. That some plane had strafed the school twice. There were some wounded. People were running all over the place, many were WAC's, except for the two Red Cross girls. They were dishing out coffee and doughnuts. It turned out that it was a captured American P-38 that was flown by a German pilot way back of the front lines.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did they charge you for the coffee and donuts?

Mr. Guennel

No, no. Well I am not sure that I should say this. Why hurt the Red Cross? Nevertheless, I wasn't too enthused about the Red Cross and some of its representatives.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was there any other time that you were fired on by anybody?

Mr. Guennel

I remember one time, in a village in Lorraine, the house next door was hit and I didn't even wake up. When I woke up there was turmoil and chaos. It was a regimental CP that was hit. There were generals, including a four-star General Patch inspecting the damage. The CP was in a school across from a row of fused houses, with shops on the ground floor and apartments above. We were above a butcher shop in the second house from the end. The end house was demolished, including the bakery that had been on the ground floor. We had slept on the third floor next door and never woke up. Unbelievable! We must have been tired. I guess you sort of get used to the noise, with artillery going out and coming in.

A couple of times I went up in our artillery spotting plane, what was it called? Whatever, the Germans never shot at those recon planes just as we didn't shoot at their 5 o'clock Charlies, as we called their artillery planes, the "Storch".

Mr. Misenhimer

The reconnaissance plane?

Mr. Guennel

Yeah, it had name. Piper Cub, that's it. We tried to identify some of the locations that we knew about through our interrogations. I was never really in danger. Like I said, I was never in a foxhole. I was fortunate to have never been in combat, man to man, rifle to rifle.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you ever hear Axis Sally on the radio?

Mr. Guennel

Axis Sally? Yeah, a few times. Most of the time we listened to German radio. We didn't have radio's in the jeeps and most of the time we were on the road, always moving, staying in a different place every night. The only exceptions were after we had blundered German attacks and were just sitting tight in one place. I remember hearing a broadcast by Goebbels that turned out to be his last. I think we were somewhere near Nuremberg. It was in Nordlingen, and I believe it was on Hitler's birthday, April 20. Nuremberg was really the great last battle. It took four days. There were several concentric rings of 88s protecting the city that had to be eliminated.

Munich, on the other hadn, was a kind of hit and miss affair. There were three divisions involved, the 42nd Rainbow, the 45th Thunderbird and ours, the 3rd. The city was cleared piece meal, neighborhood by neighborhood. Some sections surrendered as communities, cheerfully with white flags. Whereas others were fanatically defended by SS and/or Hitler Youth units. At the end there wasn't anybody left to be in charge, to surrender the cradle of Nazism. The Nazi bigwigs and the city officials had fled the city. The military officers and the Communist underground that had emerged were at odds and neither faction was in control of any part of the city. I remember hearing later on that Iron mike O'Daniel, the 3rd Division CG, drove to the center of the cite late in the afternoon for a surrender ceremony. But there was no German delegation there, only a few raggedy Communists. I guess he had the Signal Corps ready to shoot pictures of that historic, glorious event.

After Munich things were haphazard. German soldiers were surrendering all the time, everywhere. Entire units, companies, platoons, what was left of them, were popping up

with their hands up. One evening I was taking a walk outside a Bavarian village when a captain with his 30 remnants of his company came out of a roadside ditch with their hands up. What the hell was I going to do with prisoners? I told the captain to throw their weapons away and hit the autobahn and head back to Munich, that someone there would accommodate him. I also wrote him a note to show his eventual captors.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get any ribbons or medals?

Mr. Guennel

Well, the normal ones. None of them with any significance, any meaning. I would consider the infantry combat badge the top of the line.

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you get a CIB?

Mr. Guennel

No, no. Again, our interrogation team was only “attached” to the divisions that we served. The regular teams, both Captain Neiman’s with the 44th Division, I don’t remember the number, and Team 183 with the 3rd Division, I’m not sure of the names of that teams members must have gotten citations and medals and some probably the CIB.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many battle stars did you get?

Mr. Guennel

Three. But back to medals for a moment. I believe that mu buddy Herman Freudenberger deserved some recognition, the bronze star at least, for two valuable services, outstanding deeds. Both times he won a coin toss with me, that lucky guy. The

first event took place at Bitch, the great Maginot Fort the Germans had captured and were using against us. There were four outlying forts. I remember Freudenberg Farm and Sinserhof. Their artillery was intergrated and synchronized. We had found an Alsatian engineer who had the plans, the maps of the underground cables that connected the forts. The general in charge of the 44th Divisi was Brigadier Dean. The Major General was sick, back in the States, I forgot his name and I don't think he ever returned. Dean is the same General Dean who was captured during the Krean War. I remember him as tall, lanky redhead. He led a team of engineering officers, the Alsatian and Herman the interpreter. Alsations speak a German dialect. That small group crawled out there in the middle of the night. I seem to remember that it was cloudy, moonless. At the spot located by the Alsatian, they dug a hole and found the cables. With a big axe, Dean himself cut the cables. He got a silver star, as did the engineering colonel and the other engineering officers got bronze stars. Our Herman got zilch.

The other occasion dealt with the 106th Cavalry, a highly mobile outfit that roamed in front of the front lines. They had no horses, they were cavalry by name only. I believe it was near Bliesbruck, a town that had been retaken by the Germans that Herman was to meet that cavalry unit. The citizens were trying to flee the town because anyone who had collaborated with the Americans was being arrested, physically punished, even shot outright. The cavalry command couldn't let all those civilians roam the countryside, in no-mans land. Somebody at Corps must have thought that interrogators could help. Let me back up. Lt. Hochstadt tossed a coin and Herman won, again. How lucky can you get? I drove him up to the cavalry CP. It was afternoon when we found the S-2, a major. He was waiting for us in an abandoned farm house, had his feet on the table next to a

whiskey bottle. "Interrogators?" he said "we don't take prisoners. We don't want you."

We explained to him that we were trained to handle such situations, that Herman could help him. He accepted Herman for two days and that he was to be picked up again on the 3rd day. When I got back three days later, that major was a different man. Herman had set up a checkpoint on a hill above the town and with the aid of a couple priests who negotiated and organized the exodus, had screened and accepted those desperate townspeople. There was no average males who could have been German soldiers/saboteurs, only old men, women and children and they were distributed to villages behind our lines. The clincher to the S-2 conversion was the information that Herman had gotten from those old men who had been in the German Army in one or both World Wars. They knew German equipment and weapons and located them in the S-2s map, where machine guns were, in what barns tanks were hiding, where the artillery was entrenched, where CPs were and on and on. That major was sold, he was going to take prisoners from now on and he was going to ask for interrogators from Corps.

After all the thans and congratulations, there was never any documented, official recognition of Herman's valuable contributions. He deserved a bronze star. But, again, medals were reserved for their own people. Not some guy who was Corps personnel.

The same old story.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you had any reunions since you have been out?

Mr. Guennel

No, I wish we had. Lt. Hochstadt is now dead. Only Herman Freudenberger is left. I never had contact with the other three members of IPW 124. Lt. Levy and Sergeants

Robbins and Hess. Ernie Hochstadt had a strange attitude toward the war. He wanted to forget it. He didn't want to talk about it, any of it. He never made an effort to contact any of us. After all, he was the leader of IPW 124 and had made Captain. I had stayed in contact with him, he lived in Laguna Hills, CA. And I also stayed in touch with Herman Freudenberger, but it wasn't until 50 years later that we became friends again and the Hochstadts and Freudenbergers visited Hilde and me in Colorado and we visited them in California and Louisiana, respectively.

Mr. Misenhimer

Anything else you recall from your time in WWII?

Mr. Guennel

Oh, well there is a lot of things that come back. One more thing about Hochstadt. He had a story to tell and it should have been told, written down or recorded. He was born in Vienna, his father was a doctor and his family was befriended with the Viennese émigré group that went to Hollywood. In fact, I met the brother of Fred Zinneman who directed "From here to Eternity" in Heidelberg after the war. Ernie and the younger Zinneman were close friends. Ernie's parents had escaped to China and then made it to the U.S. Ernie had come to the States in 1938. He was sponsored by a Jewish family. I only hope that his son, Steve, who is a history prof, has heard the story and that he and his mother have all the letters Ernie wrote to his wife, Lenore, who now lives with him. He wrote almost daily. He also wrote many interrogation reports, almost on a daily basis. I have two of hundreds. I'm assuming that those official reports to S-2s and G-2s of the regiments and divisions that we served are in the Army archives somewhere.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, Joe it has been nice to talk to you, thank you for your time today.

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