

Before I tell you of my trip to Germany for the 60 commemoration of the liberation of Langenstein-Zweiberge Concentration Camp I will first give you the background history of how I came there. Upon graduation from Dental School in June of 1942 I enlisted in the Army of the United States. In fact my whole class did so. Now the war had been going on for six and a half months by that time. When my orders came for active duty it was July in July of 1942. I entered as a first Lieutenant in the Dental Corps. After one year of service in this country in the dental clinic in San Antonio, then the signal corps in Camp Polk Louisiana, and the combat engineers, as these outfits were sent overseas their table of organization changed and did not call for a dentist. Finally I ended up with the 8th Armored Tank Division in the medical battalion, also in Camp Polk. I was assigned to the 78th medical battalion Company B.

I will explain how the Division of fifteen thousand men and each battalion was organized. My medical battalion as well as the entire division was composed of four combat command sections. A, B, C and Reserves. I was attached to company B of the 78th Medical Battalion in combat command B. We were composed of three physicians a dentist four officers and two hundred men. One surgical truck to treat wounded while in active combat and twenty ambulances. We were a dispensable Division, which means any section of our division during combat could be assigned to any infantry division that needed a spearhead to help advance into enemy territory. The lives of our troops were dispensable. We also were a cadre outfit that trained other tank divisions how to fight in actual combat. So after eight months in tough training maneuvers in the woods of Louisiana our division was alerted to go overseas.

In a convoy of twenty ships we crossed the Atlantic and landed in England October of 1944 after a twelve day voyage. We crossed the English channel a month later after we re-supplied ourselves for combat duty and landed in Le Havre France just as the battle of the bulge was on and we advanced swiftly to become engaged in that battle. During combat, as a dentist I could do no dentistry because of the rapid forward movement of our troops along the front so I was assigned to take care of all head and neck wounds. In order to take care of our troops properly the surgical truck was not enough because it could take care of only one man at a time. What we needed was a large sheltered area to take care of the many casualties we had during combat. That meant finding a house at the front that had a roof still intact to protect us from the rain. So I volunteered as a liaison officer to find these buildings, which meant going on reconnaissance with headquarters troops to go ahead of our Division, right behind the front lines to set up a clearing station. I had to find a building large enough and with a roof intact which could be set up as a temporary treatment station where the seriously wounded were treated and sent back to the field hospital. The slightly wounded we would treat and send back to the front. Hence the title clearing station.

This became my permanent duty during the battle of the bulge and the advance across Germany until we were on the way to the Harz mountains with the third army under Patton on the way to Czechoslovakia. When our reconnaissance reached the Harz Mountain area of Germany on April 13th of 1945 I received a report from the 399th field artillery group which was part of our reconnaissance party that they came across a

concentration camp. The clearing station I had set up was about a mile and a half away from that camp. There was still fighting around that area so we had to attend to the wounded. On the following morning a war crimes commission General arrived in his Sherman tank and wanted to know if anyone knew where the concentration camp was and could he be taken there. So I volunteered to take him to it. I drove one of my company ambulances and he followed me in his Sherman tank and a jeep with his staff. We were in the town of Halberstadt and the concentration camp was in the town of Langenstein which was about two miles away.

Now throughout the war I had not seen a concentration camp. I did know about the mistreatment of the Jews since Hitler came into power but I was not prepared to see how beastly the Nazis treated the prisoners in the concentration camps. When we approached the camp, the shock of seeing walking skeletons was overpowering. When the War Crimes Commission General and his staff and I entered one of the barracks, the horrible smell of decaying bodies and the stench of fecal material took an unbearable choke-hold on us. As we looked around at the walls they were all covered with feces. The sick inmates suffering from dysentery were too weak to go to the latrine so they just backed up against the walls and relieved themselves. As we walked along at the wooden bunk beds and his photographer taking pictures, we saw the starved dead bodies and a sight that still haunts me. I saw one man moving and went to him. He was lying alongside a dead man I asked him if he understands English and with his eyes bulging out of a hollow opening in a deathlike skull he said yes. His body was crawling with giant ugly lice. I asked him how long has he been lying next to this dead man. He said he died two days ago. When I asked him why he did not get out of bed he said he did not have the strength to get up out of bed. I kept staring at the enormous size of the lice crawling, all over him it was an awful sight.

It was at the visit that I took this past April that I found out from the survivors of the camp that the Nazi Guards had fled three days before our Division came. They left everybody without food or water. They ordered the remaining three thousand prisoners who could still walk to line up in 6 groups of five hundred and took them on a death march while warning anybody hiding will be shot by the soldiers that are coming later. As we left the barracks we passed a prisoner without legs, blind and terribly beaten asked who we were. When we told him we are the Americans he said "I know I am not going to live much longer but thank God you finally have come". As we left the camp I'll never forget the General's remark as he turned to me and said "I would never believe it if I had not seen it with my own eyes." And this was one month before the war ended. It took me almost two days to get rid of the lice that were on me because of that visit. I had to boil my clothes in a large oilcan and used DDT to powder my body before I got rid of them. The next day our medical corps set up several pyramidal tents in Halberstadt in the clearing next to what seemed a school building. We threw out all the furnishings in that building and set up army cots and made it a makeshift army hospital to care for the concentration camp survivors. A field hospital General and a staff of doctors and nurses arrived to run the hospital. My medical company had twenty ambulances, which were put

to use removing the survivors from their barracks and bringing them to the makeshift hospital. First we removed all their clothes and burned it to get rid of the lice. Then we put the survivors into the pyramidal tents to clean them up and sprinkle them with DDT to make sure they carried no more lice and then carried them into the makeshift hospital, which was alongside the tents.

This was the assignment for my medical company for three days, the war was still going on so we had to continue towards the front. The field hospital staff was responsible for the treatment and care of the survivors. It was years later that I found out that twenty five men a month died during treatment. We were under the command of Patton's third army at that time and continued our advance until we reached the Russian army in Czechoslovakia. I took some photographs in Halberstadt of my men carrying the survivors out of the ambulances and burning their clothes.

When the war ended and I returned home in 1946, thankful that I was alive, and ready to concentrate on earning a living for my wife and two children. We were married two and a half years when I enlisted in the army, so I had my family when I returned from the war. I wanted to forget about the awful years I spent in the army during the war. I wanted to forget all the awful experiences so I never spoke about the concentration camp until many years later when stories of the holocaust became public knowledge.

Over twenty years later I decided to find out what the name of that concentration camp was. In 1967 we went to Israel and I visited the Yad Vashem and inquired about the concentration camp in Langenstein Germany. They checked and found nothing about the camp. Nothing recorded about it. Irene and I visited Israel every year for over twenty years and went to the Yad Vashem for information and never found out anything about the camp. I then wrote a letter to Simon Wiesenthal, the Nazi hunter, and asked him if he had any information about the camp in Langenstein. He wrote back that he never heard of it and if I find out to please inform him. In 1987, 40 years after the war we visited Israel went to the Yad Vashem as we always did and a little old lady volunteer passing by overheard our request and said yes she heard about it. She walked a little down the aisle took a ladder placed it against the book case climbed to the top and took down a large book. She turned the pages to Buchenwald and showed us .Langenstein Concentration Camp a subcamp of Buchenwald. That was the first time I knew what we had liberated. I did not know about its horror until I visited it years later and spoke with twenty survivors of the camp.

In November I received a phone call in Boca Raton from someone in Marcos Island which was on the west coast of Florida. He was speaking for a survivor who wanted to thank me and my Eighth Armored Division for giving him a new life, that is the way he put it. It was a Frenchman from Beardeaux who was searching for 58 years to thank my Division. He could not speak a word of English but was visiting a long lost love in Marcos Island (and that is a beautiful love story) and he mentioned to her how he wanted so badly to get the thanks off his chest for saving his life. She was a French lady that married an American and of course spoke English. She went next door to a young man who had a computer and told him about the Frenchman's dilemma. He went to his computer and in ten minutes found my division, which has an elaborate web site and

since I was president of the eighth Armored Division Association he got my phone number. He wanted to meet me at a lunch in Boca Raton and present me with a book he wrote about his experience in the camp as a thanks for his liberation. He came across Florida two days later where we met for lunch and it was an emotional meeting, which was broadcast on TV .His lady friend came with him so she acted as interpreter.

He told me that he and a group of survivors had been visiting the concentration camp every year for the past ten years on the week they were liberated to remember their friends that were murdered there. He presented me with the book he wrote which was in French and German. The title "Clamavi Ad Te" I cried for you. Two months later I get a letter from the women that take care of a memorial museum in memory of the concentration camp victims. They were inviting me to their 60th anniversary commemoration of their liberation April 12 to the 17th 2005. They said they never had a liberator at their yearly meeting would I please attend. So Irene and I went accompanied by my daughter Bonnie and her husband Michael.

I always hated everything German since the war and it was not an easy decision to visit that country. But I went because of the closeness that grew between that Frenchman Roger LeRoyer and me -We kept in touch by way of the internet. So we left from JFK in New York to Paris and then to Hanover where we were met by a group of 35 Frenchmen. A bus was waiting for us to take us to the hotel in Halberstadt which was about 70 miles south of Hanover. The first greeting I received before I entered the bus was from a young man of about 40 who shook my hand and said "Thanks for saving my father, if you hadn't saved my father I would not be here." It really gripped me right here.(my heart). On the bus trip I learned that not only survivors were on this trip but their children and grandchildren. There were five survivors on the bus but also the children and family of the fathers and grand fathers that were murdered at that camp. They came to show their respect and to lay wreaths on the grave of their lost ones. Two of the camp survivors were priests. The man that spoke English best told me he is coming with his sister to remember their father who was killed during the death

They told me the official name of the camp was Langenstein-Zweiberge. That is because it was in a valley between two hills of the Harz mountains. The bus trip from Hanover to Halberstadt where our hotel was , and where my outfit set up the makeshift hospital, brought me back 60 years ago when we traveled through a destroyed and flattened city and the small country sides with all the white flags flying and now on this two hour trip I see these beautiful clean new structures all the way on the trip the quaint peaked roofed houses ,the clean streets, my thoughts were that after all the destruction during the war this was all rebuilt with Marshall Plan money, our money, that went through my mind. When we arrived at the small clean hotel in Halberstadt Irene and I were given a room on the ground floor. My children were given a room on the third floor. When I asked for adjoining rooms, they said only the old people can have rooms on the ground floor. That is when I realized there was no elevator in that hotel

I was given a program for the three day visit on which every minute of every day was specifically indicated in typical German precision. The first day in the morning we were taken to the local gymnasium in Halberstadt which was similar to our high schools.

Roger Leroyer and I spoke to the class of about 50 teen agers.. We had an interpreter for Roger who spoke in French and for me. Their interest and intelligence really impressed me especially by their very thoughtful questions. I let them know I was Jewish immediately. That seemed to interest them more so that they asked what I thought of Germany during the war and what I thought of Germany now.

The students were extremely attentive and showed great interest. I was thanked profusely by the class and the teachers who presented Roger and me with a framed picture of the occasion and an invitation to come back again. From there we were taken to the center of town where in a bombed out Church that was left as a memorial of the destruction of the city, the Mayor of the town gave a speech on the 60th anniversary of the destruction of the town by air bombardment. The Federal President of Germany was supposed to speak to us that day but he could not make it because he went to the funeral for the Pope. The people were all gathered outside because the destroyed church was just two walls so every one was in the open street. While the Mayor read the president's speech it started to rain. Instead of running for cover every one opened an umbrella and the Mayor kept talking for twenty minutes in German in the heavy rain. The planners of our trip were very thoughtful. They provided us with a Russian woman interpreter who knew German and English and she accompanied us all over and interpreted the German for us. The speech was very expressive of not only what the Germans suffered but also what they had caused others to suffer. From there we were taken to Langenstein to see the Tunnel. In 1945 all I saw was the set up of about 36 barracks to house the prisoners. I never knew what work they were doing or where until 1996 when I met survivors of the camp. The tunnel was a nine mile underground factory to make airplane parts and the second generation buzz bomb- The camp was a death camp which was made up of political prisoners primarily.

The prisoners were from 23 different countries. I was told that there were criminals amongst them who were made kapos to supervise the work. I was told that the allied bombing concentrated on the airplane factories all over Germany, The airplanes were the source of the Nazi buildup for their aggression. When the Nazis took over in 1933 they immediately placed large orders with aircraft companies. The goal was to build up a powerful air force for their planned aggression. The Allied bombing was so efficient that the Nazis gave orders to build underground factories in order to continue manufacturing the airplane parts. Nazi engineers used dynamite to blast the openings and the prisoners would pick up the rocks and debris and push the carts on the tracks by hand. I was told trains would come at night and they would have to unload them no matter what time they came. Their work shifts were twelve hours a day and then they were searched on their return to the barracks and then were given a slice of bread and some watered down soup.,

Working in the dust after the dynamite explosions caused many to die of lung problems, lifting heavy rocks caused many to collapse upon which they were immediately shot. The kapos kept beating them to work faster and showed no mercy. Two of the Frenchmen I met were priests. They told me two of the prisoners were American soldiers from a downed plane. The camp was started in April of 1944 and we liberated them in April 13th 1945..The miserable treatment, insufficient nutrition, beatings, improper clothing for the miserable cold weather, and hard labor caused an average death of close to five hundred per month. One thousand eight hundred seventy five dead prisoners were registered in SS documents. A good many more are unknown. The survivors told us that they would take the dead to the town crematory in Quedlinburg where they were cremated. Then the crematory ran out of fuel so they started using one of the barracks to place the dead in it.

When the building became overloaded with the dead they put it on fire and their identities were lost. In the final weeks they started throwing the naked bodies into mass graves. One of the men in my division that first came across the pits said he saw a man still twitching in the pit. He was terribly shaken. When our outfit came the average weight of the prisoner was seventy pounds. They told me the struggle to stay alive was the only thing on their minds. Two men caught with stealing potato skins were given a public hanging. They were 22 year old kids. When they stood on the barrel with the noose around their necks one of them fell when the barrel tilted. He got up again straightened the barrel put the noose about his neck again and kicked the barrel away. The hell they all went through is indescribable.

While we were in the tunnel I spoke to several of the survivors and found out most were political prisoners who collaborated with the allies. They were put into several concentration camps before they were sent to Langenstein. Some came from Auschwitz some from Saachenhausen some from Dachau some were sent to all three before they were sent to Buchenwald and from there were sent to Langenstein. All of them said the same thing, that Langenstein Zweiberge camp was the worst extermination camp of all. Most of the prisoners were not Jewish. Roger LeRoy, the Frenchman that met me in Boca Raton was an 18 year old student who was going to the theological seminary in Paris to study the priesthood. When he got to class he tore down Hitler's picture and the Nazi flag in his room. For this the Gestapo put him in 30 days of solitary confinement and then sent him to two concentration camps before he was sent to Langenstein. He wrote a book about his experiences in Langenstein 50 years later. He says if we arrived twenty four hours later he would have been dead. Another survivor I spoke to in tunnel was a Jewish man who now teaches Judaism in Berlin. His name was Arno Lustiger. He escaped from the death march by running into a forest and missed the bullets while running behind a tree during the death march while his friend that ran with him was killed. Later I found out that Cardinal Lustiger in Paris was his cousin.

I also found out that every phase of manufacturing in Germany was done by slave labor because every German man from the ages of 14 to 50 were drafted into the German Army. Food and medicine was scarce because of the efficient allied bombing. So the slave laborers were never given enough food and medicine. None were given more than one slice of bread a day and a cup of watered down soup or ersatz coffee, sometimes so filthy that dysentery was rampant in the camp.

The tunnel was used to store ammunition for the Russian Army when East Germany was under Russian rule, and was never opened until the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp this year. April 10th, 2005. Work began to restore the tunnel in 2003 at the request of the survivors who invited us for their reunion. That was quite a full and emotional day. That evening after dinner I was showing the families of the prisoners of the camp the picture I had taken of my company ambulances bringing the survivors to the make shift hospital in Halberstadt. A woman and her son began looking at one of the pictures and

you could see the changed expression in their faces. "That is my father" he said and his mother said "it no doubt is my husband." Then they told me that he looked exactly like that just before he died of cancer last year. They told me that he remembered seeing someone take his picture when he was taken from the ambulance and been trying for 58 years to find out where he could see this picture. The son later e-mailed me to tell me that the entire family saw the picture and were grateful at last that they had what their father was looking for. His name was Henri Clogenson of France. That alone made my trip worth while.

The next day we had to leave early to follow along the death march taken by the prisoners. But Roger LeRoy told me to get up a little earlier because he thought I would want to see something the others were not going to go to. So we were taken in a little car by the interpreter and program supplier to the church square in Halberstadt and amazingly saw the memorial to the Jews of Halberstadt all of whom were killed by the Nazis. It was a group of stone columns broken off on the top and the names of all the Jews that were murdered. After saying our prayers for the dead we looked at the church and were amazed to see a huge Menorah at the entrance with a plaque which unfortunately we had no time to go close to read. We had to be taken to the group that met in a museum set up in memory of the prisoners of the camp. The pamphlets explaining the camp history were in a!! languages including Hebrew. That really impressed me.

We were given a little glass and lit candle to place at the path of the death march. On each side of the road as far as you can see there were five foot sticks of wood on which were white papers with the names of those who were killed on the death march and with those they could not identify was written, this is a man in twenty three different languages to memorialize the 8000 prisoners. WE placed the candle where it said Dus is a Mensch. Now this death march was a Nazi way of killing off the remaining live prisoners. On the 9 of April 1945 the Nazis took six groups of five hundred of the prisoners that still could stand telling them they are taking them away from the invading army so they will be safe and warned all prisoners remaining or hiding that they will be killed by the German Army coming next. The prisoners were marched in the bitter weather and those that could not keep up were shot. The march continued and circled for 80 miles and those that fell out of exhaustion there was a group of young SS behind them that would shoot them. As they marched next to a forest some of the men decided to make a run for it behind the trees. Two of the men in the group with us told me that is how they escaped and were picked up by the Americans. The march ended in Witttemberg with only 60 men still alive and rescued by the Russian army. Along the march we went by bus we stopped at many monuments to the murdered men. Those whose names they knew were put on the monument those who were not known by name the tattoo number was placed on the monument. Wreathes were laid by children and grandchildren on these graves.

In Witttemberg we were taken into Luther's church, where he started Lutheranism and we held an ecumenical service by the priests who were survivors of the concentration camp.

The stories the men told me of the death march were real horror stories. The one I recall distinctly that after marching all day at night at rest they were given a slice of bread and this time filthy soup with crawling bugs. Everyone ended up with dysentery that killed quite a few but he waited until the SS who had made a fire to heat their food snuck over when the fire was over and took a handful of ashes which he ate on the way and that controlled his dysentery. The cruelty of the Nazi regime did not end even though they knew they lost the war. It was hard for a human being to understand how they could behave this way.

The last day we were taken from our hotel and brought to Halberstadt where we had set up the makeshift hospital 60 years ago. There, seats were arranged in front of the building where my memory of the pyramidal tents had been set up during the war. Facing this building and addressing the survivors and their families sitting in front of me I unburdened my emotional feeling about this 60 anniversary of their liberation. I was glad I had come. The local newspaper printed my speech word for word so I guess it made some impression upon them. After my speech photos were taken of me and the thirteen survivor that were there. One survivor who was a priest was an invalid in a wheel chair so he staid in the hotel. Two others went to the other concentration camp they were in for the 60 dedication of their liberation.

We were then taken to the cemetery that were made upon the mass graves. It was a beautiful field of grass and flower on an elevated ground. As we walked up to it the first large metal plaque at the top of the steps astonished us. It said that here lies unknown victims of Concentration camp Langenstein Zwiiberger from various European countries Under here lie many Jews. In the lower comer it said placed in 1998. Which meant while the Russians occupied Germany there was no recognition of the Jews that perished. The president of the region, which was Saxon-Anhalt spoke to our large group in German of course, and it seemed that many of the local people were present. Then Roger Leroyer the French survivor spoke after which there was a long procession of wreath laying by every country and relatives of the killed prisoners. The wreaths were placed with solemn ceremony at the foot of the cemetery.

On the wall in back of the cemetery grounds, cut into stone was the names of the twenty countries that the prisoners came from. The last one on the right was USA and a Star of David. Upon questioning about the cemetery I was told that the graves of the victims was surrounded by plants and flowers by a local German Association. The first marker on the cemetery was placed in November 1949. Construction on the huge monument which is there now was inaugurated in September 1968. The first building to house a museum was erected in 1976. The care and responsibilities were taken over by authorities of Saxen Anhalt. Since the Russians left the building has been improved, they have a movie showing how our army is taking the survivors to the hospital ,they have pamphlets for visitors telling about the concentration camp. What amazed me is that they had one written in Hebrew. The other story I got was that on the wall in back of the cemetery where the names of all the countries were marked no star of David was there until the Russians left 17 years ago. After we paid our respect to the dead we were taken to the local school where the students put on a play based on the book Roger LeRoyer wrote of his experience in the concentration camp. I was impressed by the way the youth in the

area recognized the calamity caused by the Nazi regime. It was something they were burning into their memory.

From the school we were then taken to a local home for a hospitality. The home was just around the corner of the railroad that brought the prisoners to Langenstem. The station has not changed it is the same as it was during the war. The local resident who greeted us was not even born yet during the war but he told me how his grandfather said they used to bring the prisoners at night and they would march the two miles to the camp. The people were told they were criminals and the reason they came at night so the residents would not be disturbed. When we entered his typical country peaked roof home there was a spread of the most delicious looking fresh baked cakes his wife had baked. We spent an hour at his home with coffee and tea and speaking of the past. I asked why was it that when we asked the residents when we liberated the camp that no one knew anything about it. The answer was quite logical, they were too frightened to say that they knew. When the camp was liberated our outfit lined up a group of men from the town and made them clean up the filthy barracks of the prisoners. The hospitality host told me his uncle was one of those men.

We were then taken to a local restaurant with two floors so it could hold all of our group which had been taken to other homes for their hospitality. At each table we had a local resident sit with us during this last dinner. We were very impressed by how cordial they all were and answered all our questions. The next morning we had our last breakfast together, thanked the women who were the museum staff for inviting us and said our fond good byes to all that were not leaving on our bus and left with our French group for the Hanover airport.

The trip was a very emotional one. I was glad that my daughter and son-in-law was with us. It gave me a different slant on the German people that I met. It seemed to be the same in all the countries we were in. The people in the small towns and country side were always nicer and more hospitable than those in the big city.

I also was impressed that the Saxony Anhalt area instead of hiding the fact that the camp had tortured and murdered so many people of other countries, decided to memorialize the camp and teach the new generation of Germans what happened in the Nazi dictatorship. And still there are people who say it never happened.

