

Truly His Story

*FROM THE RISE OF HITLER TO THE LIBERATION
OF THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS: TOLD
THROUGH THE LENS OF THOSE WHO LIVED IT.*

By Hope James



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This is the special hand-bound edition for Hope being such a wonderful sister!

First edition

Bound By:

Contents

1. Introduction-----	1
2. Hitler's Rise To Power-----	5
3. Hitler's Youth-----	10
4. Tensions between Germany and France-----	16
5. The French Resistance-----	21
6. Remember Pearl Harbor!-----	24
7. Leadership-----	28
8. It's a Brotherhood-----	33
9. Forever Remembered as Heroes-----	35
10. Monique Marie Adelina James-----	38
11. Bastogne: “The Coldest in Thirty Years”-----	44
12. Horrors of the Holocaust-----	48
13. Conclusion: Truly His Story-----	53
14. <i>Bibliography</i> -----	55
15. <i>About the Author</i> -----	61

Chapter 1

Introduction: Why Study History Through a Biblical Lens?

One of the most frequent questions I receive in reference to my career choice is, “Why History?” The reality is that studying the past is crucial to the success of future generations. Not only is the study of history in and of itself important, but also the study of history through a Biblical worldview. American education is rooted in Biblical principles. Our forefathers pressed toward the goal of teaching children to read and interpret what they read, so that they could read the Bible for themselves. Not so they could get a better job or make a lot of money, but so they could read the Bible. In 1647, one of the laws passed in Massachusetts regarding education states, “it being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the *knowledge of the Scriptures*, as in former times keeping them in an *unknown tongue*...they shall set up a *Grammar-School*, the masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the Universitie.”¹[emphasis added] These people were descendants of the Protestant Reformers who realized that Satan had worked throughout the Dark Ages of history by keeping Scripture out of the hands of the people. Our forefathers understood that understanding Scripture is so crucial when it comes to truly understanding anything else.

TRULY HIS STORY

Looking at history through a Biblical lens gives it meaning and I can make connections that otherwise cannot be made when people try to take God out of history. After all, history is truly *His Story*. I have learned over the years that studying history while keeping in mind Biblical principles explain the nature of why certain events take place. I see His hand working throughout the pages of history. A sad and hard question to consider is, “why do bad things happen, why do people die, what is the cause of all these wars and continual downhill destruction?” My question in return has always been, “why would God love a sinner like me and send his only Son to die on a cross for a world that is so fallen and steeped in sin?” I have continually concluded that the reason is not because human beings are loveable, but because God is love. John 4:7-8 says, “beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for *God is love.*² [emphasis added] He has revealed Himself through His written word which answers the questions people face today. There is a desperate need for education to return to what it was meant to be. When there is a trade for the Philosophy of men rather than the precious knowledge of God, the effects are disastrous and can be seen throughout our school systems today. Colossians 2:8 says, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”³ The man-made philosophical myths of neutrality and “subjective truth” is rampant in the school of thought today.

Since the age of the Enlightenment, neutrality has been a popular theme among scholars. Since then, “there has been a decided effort for intellectual and rational “neutral ground” to be the starting point of all knowledge and discussion.”⁴ Professors who begin almost every class at the beginning of the year by telling students to be open minded to all ideas presented, are blind to the fact that they constantly contradict themselves when it comes to being truly “open minded.” So many professors within the secular school system are biased. No matter how hard they try say that they are neutral, it is impossible. Neutrality is a myth. In the real world, “there simply is no presuppositional-

CHAPTER 1

free and neutral way to approach reasoning.”⁵ Professors who do not hold the Bible as their source of truth are sometimes hostile towards Christian students. In their hostility, they contradict themselves when they try to shut down any Christian ideals presented. Liberal professors have a certain set of ideas they want to portray. In order to get those ideas across successfully, they make history fit into their worldview, rather than letting the Bible and historical record shape their worldview. They are open to listening to another individual’s ideas, but only if that individual agrees with their worldview. There needs to be a change in the way history is taught. History should be taught in a true light, and the past will speak for itself.

The study of History also reveals that the Bible can be trusted and that it is reliable. First, truth is not subjective, and it never has been. Men and women should draw their conclusions from truth rather than twisting the truth to make it fit their own opinions. This is called “Revisionist History” and I have personally seen the damage that it can cause. I have witnessed professors advocating a socialistic form of government; the very form of government that American soldiers died fighting against. I have heard people deny that the Holocaust took place; it is beyond me how someone can turn a blind eye to the murder of six million people. There are people alive today who have lived through these times and will testify to the horrific events that did indeed take place. May today’s generation take lessons from those who have gone before them. A French writer sums up the dangers of Revisionist History well. He writes, “The first step in liquidating a people... is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, *invent a new history*. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was.”⁶ When studying the horrific events of the Holocaust, it speaks to the seriousness of sin and the effect sin has on mankind. The horrors that humanity had to endure at the hands of the Nazi regime, Pearl Harbor, D-day, Bastogne, and the Holocaust are all historical events that should be taught and remembered not only for the sake of honoring our nations heroes and their families, but also to reveal the goodness of God through all the pain and suffering. In offering men a way of salvation through God’s only son, Jesus Christ, God has shown that He desires

TRULY HIS STORY

a relationship with mankind. God has revealed Himself through His written Word and warns us of these uncertain times ahead, but He has given us a hope to look forward to at the end of *His Story*. Throughout History, God has continually pursued a relationship with mankind and has been faithful and Just in keeping His promises even in dark and perilous times; the historical accounts of the people who lived during the second World War reveal not only the sinful nature of mankind, but also the loving and faithful nature of God.

2

Chapter 2

Hitler's Rise to Power and His Hatred for the Jews

Historians debate the nature of the relationship between World War I and World War II. The question can be rightly asked regarding the nature of the relationship between the two wars: was World War II a continuation of the first World War or were they two different wars?

Germany was hurt in many ways after World War I and World War II was their chance to revive the glory of their past. Ironically, World War I was known as “the war to end all wars” yet, it set the stage for another World War. Winston Churchill wrote, “I must regard...the second World War as a continuation of the story of the first World War.”⁷ Germany paid a heavy price at the conclusion of the first great war.

The Treaty of Versailles re-established territorial lines among the nations. The Germans lost the land they had occupied, were forced to lay down their arms in France, and pay for the damage that had been done because of the first war. Germany began to suffer greatly. During the 1920s, “Germany had wrestled with the economic disorganization and social demoralization that

TRULY HIS STORY

followed its defeat in World War I, and the crisis was, by 1930, acute.”⁸ When a nation falls into fear, they are most certain to give up their freedoms for security.

This fear set the stage for various leaders to take control with their promises of security and superiority. Miller notes that, “German democracy seemed unable to cope with this crisis, but Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist (Nazi) party promised relief from economic ills, escaped from the “bondage” of the Versailles Treaty, and the union of the entire German race under one strong government.”⁹ Adolf Hitler made his way into the minds and hearts of the German people, earning their trust by promising them security and prosperity. Adolf Hitler was a veteran of World War I. He suffered physical injuries at the end of World War I. Churchill writes that, “in October 1918, a German corporal had been temporarily blinded by chlorine gas in a British attack near Comines. While he lay in hospital in Pomerania, defeat and revolution swept over Germany.”¹⁰ Not only did Hitler experience physical injuries, but also a type of psychological turmoil was evident. As he lay in the hospital, “the shock of defeat, the collapse of law and order, and the triumph of the French, caused...an agony which consumed his being, and generated those portentous and measureless forces of the spirit which may spell the rescue or the doom of mankind.”¹¹ It was not long after the downfall of Germany that young Hitler began associating himself with German Nationalist groups.

He was a member of the National Socialist German Workers Party. This party was the very beginning of the Nazi Party.¹² Hitler began developing a deeper hatred for the Jewish people. Hitler was arrested along with other leaders in the party. During his imprisonment, he was able to complete one of his most significant works, *Mein Kampf*.¹³ This book laid out his inner most political thoughts. One could say that this piece of work was a blueprint of his plan for Germany. The book discusses topics such as, extreme German nationalism, extreme antisemitism, and lebensraum.¹⁴ There was a shift in party membership rates from 1929 to 1932. The number of members rose from 178,000 to 800,000 people, in just a few years.¹⁵ Churchill writes, “he

CHAPTER 2

had mingled in Vienna with extreme German Nationalist groups and here he had heard stories of sinister undermining activities of another race foes and exploiters of the Noradic world—the Jews.”¹⁶ Hitler’s hatred for the Jewish people would grow much worse as time went on. Hitler was elected and appointed German Chancellor in 1933.¹⁷ Take note of the fact that Hitler did not waltz in and assert power, he was elected by the people.

Hitler used the Jewish people as scapegoats during his reign of power. The stage was being set for a mass genocide. Antisemitism is not a new concept, it has been passed down through the ages and it still is evident in some areas today. Martin Luther wrote some scathing things about the Jewish people. Luther advocated, “set[ting] fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them.”¹⁸ Antisemitism did not begin with Luther either, but Luther did influence Hitler. Hitler came to the conclusion that, “Germany had been stabbed in the back and clawed down by the Jews, by the profiteers and intriguers behind the front by the accursed Bolsheviks in their international conspiracy of Jewish intellectuals.”¹⁹ Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, wrote degrading things about the Jewish people often laying all the blame of Germany’s downfall on them.

Hitler set the Aryan race on a pedestal while making the Jewish people out to be less than a part of the human race. He issued laws against the Jewish people and in 1933 announced a day long boycott against the Jews.²⁰ In 1935 he declared that the Jews were no longer German citizens.²¹ In 1938, he required that Jewish people carry identification cards and were restricted in their job opportunities.²² Sadly, an event called Kristallnacht²³ is almost identical to what Luther advocated against the Jews. A young seventeen-year old boy assassinated a German diplomat named Ernst Vom Rath, “in protest against the deportation of some twelve thousand Polish Jews living in Germany.”²⁴ In response to the assassination of the German diplomat Hitler issued an order and, “thousands of homes and stores were looted, damaged, or burned, and the destruction extended to more than fifteen hundred synagogues and several Jewish cemeteries. Police and firefighters stood idly by, their only

mandate being to protect “Aryan” property. Estimates vary on the number killed in the rioting, from as few as three dozen to as many as two hundred.²⁵ This was the beginning of a mass genocide of God’s precious treasure.

World War II is often referred to as the war against the Jews. There are numerous

examples of how the Germans and others made up propaganda; blaming the Jews for the ills of war. Goebbels said in a German publication, “World War II was a struggle driven by world Jewry’s immeasurable hatred against the Aryan Worldview, and culture.”²⁶ Goebbels continued in his quest to turn others against the Jews when, “the German papers cried out, “The Jews Wanted the War!...Jewish money was behind the struggle led by the three great Allied leaders...”²⁷ Goebbels actively painted a picture of the Jewish people as being evil; whether it be by radio or newspaper, it was always present in the ears and eyes of the German people. He made it appear as if the Jews were behind every grotesque act that took place in opposition to the Germans. This situation reveals the power of media propaganda and the importance of making God true and every man a liar.

God has made a promise to the Jewish people and He will always be faithful in fulfilling His promises. Faithfulness and speaking the truth are two beautiful attributes of God. Paul speaks to the Jewish people in Romans chapter three. Here, Paul provides answers to their questions in a letter written to the people in Rome and the conversation goes as such, “what advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of Circumcision?²⁸ Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?²⁹ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar, as it is written...”³⁰ The usage of language here is extremely powerful. Paul uses the strongest Greek negative that can possibly be used. In doing so, he strongly asserts that God will always be and remain faithful to His promises, even when men are unfaithful in their ways.³¹

God speaks about the Jewish people and the Nation of Israel in Scripture.

CHAPTER 2

God made a covenant with the Israelites in the book of Genesis. Genesis 12:2-3 says, “and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”³² It is evident throughout history that Satan hates the Jewish people and wants so desperately to destroy them. There have been many attempts to destroy Israel and the World War II era is no doubt one of those attempts. Satan was at work when he put it into the mind of Adolf Hitler to hate the Jewish people, because Satan knows if he could somehow wipe the Jewish people off the face of the earth, then what God said would not stand to be true. God has always brought His people through these troubled times and He will continue to do so until Christ returns.

The Assyrians, the Hittites, the Edomites, and the Chaldeans are all people groups that interacted with the Israelites in the Old Testament. These people groups cease to exist, yet the ¹Jewish people are still thriving. How does one group of people survive numerous wars in a world that seems to be against them? From ancient times to the present, the Jewish people have been known to be a wandering people. They have been through the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, the Holocaust of World War II, Israel’s war for independence, the Lebanon war, the War of Attrition, Israel’s Six-Day war, the Yom Kippur war, and others. Dr. Mal Couch writes, “The establishment, scattering, and preservation of the Jewish people is the second greatest story ever told among the human family”³³ Many people throughout history have hated the Jewish people; yet, the Jews have thrived and emerged out of history’s darkest moments. Psalms 105:24 says, “He increased His people (Jews) greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.”³⁴ Even someone as evil as Hitler could not destroy God’s precious treasure. God’s promises will always stand. There is no denying that Hitler was an evil man, but not all German civilians shared the same views as Hitler. Some German people were also victims of the Nazi regime.

3

Chapter 3

Hitler's Youth: Producing "Little Soldiers"

A woman by the name of Gertrude Schumann, lived under Hitler's control of Germany. She explains how she felt pride in being German, until the end of the World War II. She was a child and experienced what it was like to be a part of Hitler's Youth. At first, she felt safe and secure under Hitler's regime. Her family went through unthinkable situations and her story is a living testament to the fact that not all Germans agreed with Hitler's ways, her family tried to escape the situation they were caught up in. Her family did nothing wrong. Like many others, they were in a fight for survival and freedom.

Mrs. Schumann begins her story writing:

I was born in April 1934 in the town of Gera, Germany. Germany was prospering again after WWI, thanks to Adolph Hitler. My family owned a tour bus company and we were doing very well. I loved riding on the buses with my dad and "helping". I can remember hearing my parents, grandparents and other grown-ups discussing the possibility of war. War? I didn't understand. I had no idea what war would mean for me. Germany, under Hitler, was a

CHAPTER 3

safe country, crime was down, and the economy was getting better every day. I felt safe and secure as a young German girl in Gera. I felt pride in being German, as did most Germans. Hitler was passionate about Germany and that passion spread like wildfire through the rest of the country.

I began in the Hitler Youth when I was 6 or 7. All kids were in the Hitler Youth, we had to be. We had fun making crafts and singing songs. We would also visit the soldiers in the hospital and volunteer there. In my opinion, it was very similar to the Girl Scouts in the US. People have said that we were taught to hate the Jews. I was NEVER told bad things about the Jews, maybe the older kids were, but we weren't. As an adult, many years later, I can say that maybe I have suppressed some of those memories. The war and aftermath were so traumatic. I do remember seeing negative propaganda and posters about the Jews, because I remember feeling scared of them, almost like they weren't human. I remember seeing a Jewish man once and screaming and running away.

I can honestly tell you that I NEVER realized the Jews were being harmed. Later, when I learned of the killings, I felt sad as I remembered my friend Anna. Anna was a beautiful, dark-haired girl with beautiful big green eyes. I remember being friends with her and going to her house to play. One day, Anna didn't come to school. One day led to several days and I finally asked my teacher where Anna was. My teacher wouldn't answer me. I asked several times but didn't get an answer. After school, I walked to Anna's house. No one was there, the house looked abandoned. Everyone and everything was gone. I don't know what happened to Anna; maybe they were rich and escaped. But, they didn't look rich. I feel sure she was taken. The teacher probably couldn't talk about it. Now I know that if you talked, you disappeared too.

It really is true that war is hell. Being a child during a war is scary and confusing. All the alarms and bombings, death and destruction. I remember there were different alarms telling us of air raids and ground troops approaching. At night, I still wake afraid when I hear a loud jet flying

TRULY HIS STORY

overhead. We had curfews at night, and I remember hearing trains passing by. We were told that the trains were transporting soldiers. Now, of course, I know that they were probably moving the Jews. Anna may have been on one of those trains. I will never forget the first bombs-the smells, the people, and the destruction. One of my friends, Anita, was killed when a bomb hit her house. She was only in 2nd grade. My scariest memory is of my own house being bombed. I was home sick from school, probably about 10 years old or so, it is hard to remember. I remember the air raid siren sounding and my mom telling me to get in the basement. It was 11AM. She finally grabbed me and shoved me in, grabbed her beautiful fur coat and slammed the door. We barely had the door closed when the bomb hit. Part of the basement collapsed and we were trapped overnight and well into the next day. I remember telling my mother "grandpa will save us". She was very scared. She made me breathe into her fur coat to filter out the dust and keep me alive. My Hitler Youth group worked to dig us out. I remember the sound of a voice asking us how many were alive. My mother said, "all of us". She was very scared. If several of us had been dead, they would have stopped trying to rescue the rest of us. The only one that died was our

beautiful maid. She worked for us while her husband was off fighting in the war. She fell on the gas line, which was beginning to leak. I believe that by dying, she saved our lives and I will always be grateful to her.

Daddy was in the military for only a short time. He came out to become the bus driver for the Reich to transport workers who worked on the weapons for the war. Daddy was NOT part of the party. I don't know how he avoided it, but he did. I know everybody says that now, but he truly wasn't. Maybe he bribed someone or knew someone, I don't know. I had a lot of enthusiasm to help soldiers and Germany. I didn't fully understand everything that was happening. My parents couldn't do anything to squelch my enthusiasm out of fear of my telling someone (I was young and wouldn't have known any better), and they would be arrested. I do remember in January of 1945, I gave my dad a plaque of Hitler. My mother saw it first, and asked "What is this!!?!" and threw it in the trash. I think that explains how she felt very well.

After our house was bombed in Gera, we moved to another home. The

CHAPTER 3

day after my birthday, I remember having on my Hitler Youth uniform and soldiers were telling us to rise up and fight the Americans. They were trying to give me a weapon. I don't know the American term for it, but it was used to fight tanks. I remember feeling a hand on my shoulder and my father saying "She is not going." He lifted me up and took me home. He told my mother to "go somewhere, take the kids away from this". I remember my mom saying "We are dead either way; we might as well go with you." So, we all left together. It took a few weeks, but we headed toward Austria with my Dad in his tour bus. I remember the bus getting shot at and us having to jump in ditches. When we made it to Hallein, Austria, we stayed in a motel. Dad hid the bus in the back yard of an Austrian Bakery. We didn't know that French POW's worked in the bakery and they stole the bus. So, we were stuck in Austria. While there, we worked on a farm. I will never forget my elegant mother milking a cow. I look back and this was all a blessing. If the bus hadn't been stolen, we would have probably went back to Gera, which is on the Eastern side of Germany. So, we would have been stuck in the Eastern block.

After the war was over, we eventually made it back to the Western side and lived in Goslar. My dad received a call from Bavaria and one of our buses had been found. So, he brought it home and tried to start up his business again. While my dad was on a route from Goslar to Hamburg, my mom got the hair-brained idea to go back to Gera to retrieve what was left of our clothes from my Grandmother. I refused to let my mother go alone. We found someone who agreed to be our "guide" and help us to illegally cross the border. He led us straight to the Russians. We were put in a "jail" with a woman from Berlin and 3 British Air Force men. The British were beaten badly. The Russians would come at night and say "lady, come peel potatoes", but actually they were raping the women. The first night they took the woman from Berlin. She and my mother had hidden me behind them. The next day we had to walk to Osterwieck, and it seemed like miles. They put us in a giant hall with boarded windows, no toilets, no food. That night, the Russians came again "come peel potatoes", this time they came to my mom. I don't know what came over us, but we began to act like we were crazy, throwing our arms up in the air and making faces. They left her alone. The next day they took us to

TRULY HIS STORY

a train station and told us to get on the train and head to the western side. My mom told me that we had come to get to Gera and we weren't stopping now that we were so close. So we found a way to get to Gera. We sacked everything up and headed back to the border. We went to a different area this time. We saw a man with a newspaper and he helped us cross back over. I remember the rustling of the weeds and potato plants as we crawled on our hands and knees. When we thought we were safe on the other side, we saw a group of teenagers and asked them if we were in the west. They turned us in to the military there. They thought we were escaping from the eastern side and were going to send us back. We got in touch with my father, who came and picked us up. He was furious, and wouldn't talk for weeks. All he would say is "How could you do all of this for lousy clothes?"

I moved to America as an adult and have lived here for many years now. I love America, but I also have pride in being a German. After the war, all the pride was gone. Most of us felt shame and most of us don't agree with what Hitler did. When I first got the drift of all that had happened, I felt like I had lost something. I had lost pride in being a German, disgrace in my country. Now, despite everything, I am proud to be a German. In the movies and in the media, it is always portrayed as "the bad German". It infuriates me. My family didn't do anything wrong. I am not saying others didn't, but WE didn't. It is seldom that you find someone open-minded enough to see that there was bad on both sides, and there WAS bad on both sides.³⁵ If you want to know how I feel about my experiences during the war, honestly it is like a bad dream. Some stories don't seem true to even me. Why would Hitler kill all of those innocent people? I don't know, I don't have words for something like that. It was insanity. In terms of being a child going through this war, I can say that I hope my children or grandchildren never go through this—seeing people getting shot, friends getting killed, digging people out of ruins, pulling dead people out of ruins, the smells, and such. We were little soldiers, 10 going on 30."

Historians have a responsibility to keep true stories, like Mrs. Schumann's, alive. She stated that she, "hope[d] her children or grandchildren never go through [something] liketh[at]."³⁶ The work of a Historian is to make sure that

CHAPTER 3

people understand what happened and how to make sure History does not repeat itself. It is important for future generations to grasp these stories so that they never have experience stories like this for themselves. It is amazing to see how God brought her safely to America. God is always good, and He has a way of restoring beauty to damaged lives. “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in him.”³⁷

4

Chapter 4

Tensions between Germany and France: *Blitzkrieg!*

After World War I, the French people had taken back the territory previously occupied by the Germans. This territory was called the Alsace-Lorraine; Germany had gained this territory after the Franco-German war in 1871 and kept it up until 1919 following the Paris Peace conference.³⁸ World War II began when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Shortly thereafter, Great Britain and France declared War on Nazi Germany, September 3, 1939.

In 1934, leading up to the beginning of World War II, Hitler began to rebuild the German army. He proceeded cautiously and little by little, his army grew stronger. One of Hitler's goals was to nullify the demands laid out in the Treaty of Versailles. The conditions of the Treaty were offensive to Hitler because he thought it belittled Germany. In 1936, Hitler sent his troops marching into the Rhineland, "which had been established as a demilitarized zone under the terms of the treaty."³⁹ The Germans experienced no restraint for breaking the demands of the treaty. For Hitler, the lack of resistance seemed like more than enough of an invitation to keep his plans moving forward. He started working on some fortifications on the border of France

CHAPTER 4

and Belgium. Hitler believed that any land or people groups that were Germanic in their roots ought to be returned to Germany. His next stop was going to be Austria. Because Austria was his homeland, he had close ties to the country. The Treaty of Versailles also, “decreed that Austria and Germany should never be united.”⁴⁰ Although there were Austrians who opposed the Nazi’s, Austria seemed to slightly welcome them.

Hitler had ardently convinced much of the population that Germany could get away with ignoring the agreements made in the Treaty of Versailles. He believed that they could become unstoppable in gaining the territory that was taken from them. His thoughts were that, although France and Great Britain would oppose his actions, they would not interfere, unless they became an immediate threat to their borders. Great Britain and France continued to ignore the signs of aggression from Germany.

In 1935, Germany had announced the creation of a new air-force along with a military expansion through drafting soldiers.⁴¹ The German army rapidly grew from 100,000 troops to 500,000 troops in a short period of time.⁴² In 1939, the Nazi’s were focused on the conquest of Poland. The Germans had troops set along the western front from the Aix-la-Chapelle to the Swiss frontier.⁴³ Germany grew even stronger after the conquest of Poland. They had trained about 155 divisions in comparison to France’s meager 70 divisions opposite to the Germans.⁴⁴ France was heavily reliant on their Maginot Line. General British staff had noticed that there was a gap between the northern end of the Maginot Line and the British fortified front.⁴⁵ That, along with lack of coherent leadership and deeper discussion about military tactical changes made the French more vulnerable than they should have been.

Churchill explains that, “the enemy, profiting by the eight months’ delay and by the destruction of Poland, had armed equipped, and trained about 155 divisions, of which ten were... (“Panzer”).⁴⁶ Hitler’s agreement with Joseph Stalin had enabled him to reduce the German forces in the east to the smallest proportions.”⁴⁷ German forces in the east to the smallest proportions.”⁴⁷

Churchill compared the strength of the German Army to that of the French Army. Churchill explains, “the German army had grown in strength and maturity with every month that had passed, and they now had a vastly more powerful armour. The French Army, gnawed by Soviet-inspired communism and chilled by the long, cheerless winter on the front had actually deteriorated.”⁴⁸ Hitler used 126 divisions in his conquest of France. He split the divisions into three army groups, each of them employed with a specific task. Ten of the divisions were heavily armored Panzer divisions. Also used in the attack were three-thousand armored vehicles and one-thousand of these vehicles were identified as tanks.⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that if the divisions available had come to French aid, the result might have been different. There was a grand total of 135 divisions that could have united against the enemy. France’s problem was that they were spread out and were not coherent in their counterattack. Churchill explains that the French had, “six armored divisions, with which alone they could have countered the massed Panzer assault, were widely distributed over the front, and could not be collected together to operate in coherent action.”⁵⁰ France being unprepared, the Nazi’s cunningly made their way into France. It was a quick tactical surprise, that should have never been a surprise at all. Churchill also took some of the blame regarding unpreparedness for the attack. He believed that there should have been a conversation between France and Great Britain that took place in the winter of 1939. He believed that doing so might have been better than making assumptions.⁵¹

CHAPTER 4



Gibson, Floyd. Bastogne, Belgium. 1944. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's private collection.

Pictured above: American solider with a German tank in Bastogne.

Germany invaded France and once again gained the Alsace-Lorraine territory on May 10, 1940. The Alsace-Lorraine territory was the region that separated France and Germany. France, being naïve at the time, believed that their Maginot line would protect them from a German invasion. Churchill writes about the “deep Fear of Germany [that] pervaded the French Nation on the morrow of their dazzling success. It was this fear that had prompted marshal Foch to demand the Rhine frontier for the safety of France against her larger neighbor.”⁵² Europe sadly turned a blind eye to Hitler’s capabilities. They were blinded to the destruction of their country that was to come. Hitler assaulted France by using a deadly war tactic, later known as: *Blitzkrieg*⁵³ warfare. Hitler’s *Blitzkrieg* tactics obliterated France’s military fortifications along their Maginot Line. One of the European’s key mis-judgements included believing Hitler when he said that his increasing military strength was for defensive purposes.⁵⁴ The people of France would be forever changed by the German occupation of their homeland.

5

Chapter 5

The French Resistance

The French Resistance played a crucial part in the success of the Allied forces. So many civilians put their lives on the line so that they could be free from Nazi tyranny. The people within the French Resistance acted as spies for the Allied forces. Being discreet, they listened carefully and studied the German's every move. From 1940-1944 the French had learned the German's habits and secrets exceedingly well. The number of people within the Resistance grew considerably as the years went by.⁵⁵ Without the work of those in the Resistance, D-day would not have seen the same successful outcome, as it did with the Resistance. No doubt they were risk takers, but in the end, it was for the liberation of their homeland. As the notorious historian Stephen Ambrose puts it, "Sabotage was [a]... Resistance specialty."⁵⁶

The Resistance had to take many precautions, so they could fly under the radar. The people involved in the resistance did not have the weapons they needed to defend themselves in the event of trouble. Ambrose explains that the Resistance, "was always subject to German penetration. It was inadequately armed; in many cases totally unarmed...as most French people wanted no trouble with the Germans and feared the consequences of stirring them up."⁵⁷ Several of these brave people were very young. They participated

TRULY HIS STORY

in acts of sabotage such as blowing up trains, slowly destroying what the Panzer division called “Tigers,” and hiding explosives.

Among the names of the people who were a part of the Resistance were, Anthony Brooks, a sixteen-year old girl named “Tetty” and her boyfriend, and eighteen-year old Andre Heintz. Anthony Brooks was a twenty-four year old who was studying in France at the time the War broke out.⁵⁸ In 1944, he was a part of the Special Operations Executive in Southern France.⁵⁹ He was basically a leader in the Resistance. He would receive supplies from the Allied forces and distribute them among his fellow Resistance workers. His job was to give the people of the resistance orders on how to carry out their work. He did his job well when he recruited young Tetty and her friends.

In 1944, the 2nd SS Panzer Division received brand new Tiger tanks that were some of the best that Germany could produce.⁶⁰ Brooks decided to give Tetty and her boyfriend the task of replacing the oil of the tanks with a different substance. They worked on the task during nightfall and had successfully completed the task when D-Day arrived. Ambrose writes, “they siphoned off all the axle oil, replacing it with and abrasive powder parachuted in by SOE. Brooks told Tetty and the others to throw away the oil, but of course the French said it was ludicrous to throw away his beautiful green oil, so they salvaged it as it was quality motor oil.”⁶¹ When the *Das Reich* got the orders to move into Normandy on D-Day, all of their tanks were completely ruined and could not be used in battle. In fact, they were so severely damaged that they could not be repaired. This put the Germans almost two weeks behind. The division that German general Erwin Rommel had expected to come on D-plus four had arrived on D-plus seventeen.

Another amazing triumph for the French Resistance involved a nine-year old boy who was blind. The Germans often built hidden fortifications on private French land. In this specific case, the Germans had chosen to build their fortification on the land of a farmer who had an eight-year old son who was blind. The Germans paid little attention to this boy because of his handicap and they foolishly disregarded him as a threat. The boy had a

CHAPTER 5

wonderful memory and recalled some of the information that the Germans had discussed while around the boy. One day, “The boy hitched a ride to Bayeux. There he managed to get in touch with Andre Heintz, an eighteen-year old in the Resistance. The boy gave Heintz this information; Heintz sent it to England via his little homemade radio transmitter (hidden in a Campbell soup can...) thus the British navy, on D-day, had the exact coordinates of the bunkers.”⁶² The stories of the people who were involved in the French Resistance speak to the integrity of the French. They had their very way of life stolen almost overnight, and they were determined to win it back. The United States entry into World War II would be one step closer to the liberation of France.

6

Chapter 6

Remember Pearl Harbor!

The United States entered World War II on December 7, 1941. December 7th was a day that shook America to its core. The Navy lost more men that day than it did during the Spanish-American War and the first World War combined.⁶³ The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor was one of the biggest intelligence failures in American History. The Japanese realized that the United States Navy posed as a possible threat to their southward expansion. The Japanese desperately wanted to cripple the U.S. Navy. Instead of destroying our Navy, they lit a fire that drove the United States into winning World War II. Even through the destruction of Pearl Harbor, it is evident that God was taking care of America and that He had a plan.

December 1941, in the cool heat of a Hawaiian Saturday night, life was quite beautiful. As the orange colors of a tropical sunset softly faded to pink and disappeared into the night sky, the music played. Many of the girls wore beautifully colored flowers in their long dark hair. The men held their Hawaiian girls close, dancing through the night to a popular song of the times, Glenn Miller's *Moonlight Serenade*. A great artist could not paint a more beautiful picture. How could anything possibly go wrong in this kind

CHAPTER 6

of a paradise? No one was prepared for the disaster that would soon arrive.

At 6:00am, a wave of 183 Japanese planes departed and headed for the U.S Naval base at Pearl Harbor. At 7:02am American Radars began to pick up signals regarding planes coming toward Pearl Harbor.⁶⁴ They made the mistake of assuming that the aircraft being detected was American. U.S intelligence had been confident that if the Japanese attacked it would take place in one of the nearby European colonies rather than Pearl Harbor, which was around 4,000 Miles away from Japan. A second wave of Japanese aircraft left at 7:15am; a total of 167 planes made up the second fleet.⁶⁵ The bombing of Pearl Harbor commenced at approximately 7:55am on Sunday, December 7, 1941. The Japanese had planned these two attacks far enough apart so that they could take out the medics and first responders who came to help after the first attack. Twelve U.S vessels were destroyed during the bombing of Pearl Harbor, nine others were damaged, nearly three-hundred airplanes were destroyed, and many lives lost. More than 2,400 Americans lost their lives that day and another 1,000 were wounded, including civilians. This attack marked the beginning of U.S involvement in World War II.

A man named Jim Broomes was stationed on the *USS Arizona*. He was born on October 2, 1912.⁶⁶ He was one of the few crew members who lived to see the end of the war. Amazingly, he was released from service just three days before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He was shipped back to the continental United States the day after the bombing took place.⁶⁷ After the War, he received the position of president for the remembrance society of the *USS Arizona*.⁶⁸ Twenty years after the attack at Pearl Harbor, they met for a remembrance ceremony and it was there that Broomes met a man who claimed that Broomes had saved his life. Baffled, Broomes replied, what are you talking about, I never saw any action?⁶⁹ The man continued to explain that he had been arrested by Broomes before the bombing and it was because he had been arrested that he was not aboard the *Arizona* when it tragically went down.⁷⁰ The man said if it had not been for Broomes then he would not be alive and he wouldn't have his family.⁷¹ In this man's eyes, Broomes was a

hero.



James, H. (n.d.). [Photograph]. Pearl Harbor Historical Site, Hawaii.

Pictured top: The beautiful shores of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

After the attack, Winston Churchill believed, “Hitler’s fate was sealed. Mussolini’s fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder...United, we could subdue everybody else in the world. Many disasters, immeasurable cost and tribulation lay ahead, but there was no more doubt about the end.”⁷² The man who planned the attack was Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. He knew he had made a grave mistake in getting the United States involved in the War. He wrote in his journal, “I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.”⁷³

CHAPTER 6

Yamamoto was right. The U.S military leaders would always remember Pearl Harbor and the men who lost their lives at the hands of a destructive regime. A respected man from the war said, “my world changed dramatically... when our unit received news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.”⁷⁴ The Americans fought not only for the liberation of the French, but also for the families of the men that lost their lives during the disaster at Pearl Harbor. This tragedy would drive them to become some of the greatest leaders of the war.

Chapter 7

Leadership

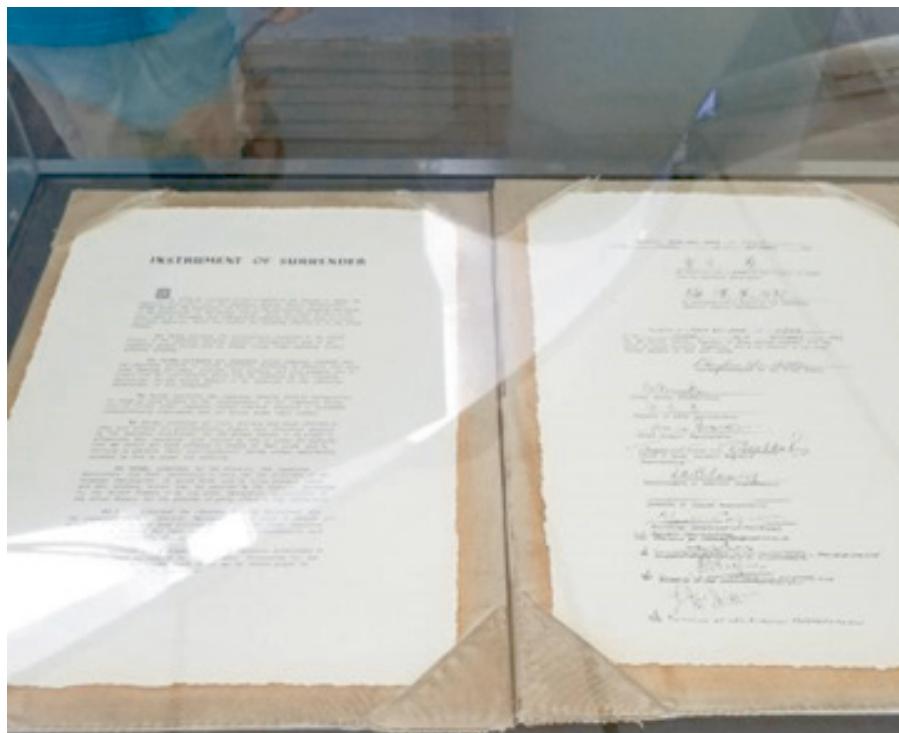
Dwight D. Eisenhower was named the commander of the Allied forces in the European theater while Admiral Chester Nimitz was named commander of the Pacific Fleet. Both men were outstanding leaders. Not only did the leadership show within the supreme commanders, but it was also revealed in men like Richard Winters, who was a part of Easy Company. General George Patton understood the importance of excellent leadership and he stated that, “leadership is the thing that wins battles...”⁷⁵

In 1885, Chester Nimitz was born in Texas. At the young age of 15 he was accepted into the United States Naval academy and graduated in 1905.⁷⁶ “Nimitz became an expert in submarine tactics and technology, was an early advocate of diesel engines, and directed construction of the submarines base at Pearl Harbor.”⁷⁷ He was well prepared for the tasks he would face as commander of the Pacific fleet. In the following weeks after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor Nimitz was appointed Commander and Chief of the Pacific Fleet and later would become commander of the Pacific Ocean Areas.⁷⁸ Most historians agree that he was the right man at the right time for this job. He exhibited excellent leadership skills by, “restoring morale, building an

CHAPTER 7

able and aggressive team and brilliantly commanding naval forces during the critical Battle of Midway.”⁷⁹ Because of Nimitz outstanding performance of leadership he was promoted to the rank of Fleet Admiral. He was also assigned to be the signatory for the United States in the formal surrender of the Japanese on the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.⁸⁰

TRULY HIS STORY



World War II formally ends on September 2, 1945, as representatives of the warring



Ito Mamoru
signs at 0904 by
I in behalf of
Japan and
overment

General Yoshijiro Umezu,
signs at 0906 by command
and in behalf of the
Japanese Imperial
General Headquarters

General Douglas MacArthur
signs at 0908 as Supreme
Commander for the
Allied Powers

Fleet Admiral Chester W.
Nimitz signs at 0912
representing the
United States.

General Ira Yeng-Chen
signs at 0913 represe
the Republic of China

James, H. (n.d.). *The Instrument of Surrender* [Photograph]. Pearl Harbor Historical Site, Hawaii

Pictured above: *The Instrument of Surrender*. Located on The USS Missouri

Eisenhower attended the U.S Military Academy at West Point in 1911.⁸¹ Many noticed the leadership skills in Eisenhower at an early stage in Eisenhower's career. Sgt. Maj. Claude Harris said, "[He] was a strict disciplinarian, an inborn solider, but most human, considerate...Despite his youth, he possessed a high understanding of organization...this principle built for him high admiration and loyalty from his officers perhaps unequaled by few commanding officers."⁸² The Superior chief of staff at West Point, also had much to say about Eisenhower. Douglas MacArthur wrote of him saying, "this is the best officer in the Army. When the next war comes, he should go right to the top."⁸³ He was well esteemed among his fellow officers. Eisenhower had his own views of leadership; he believed it was something that had to be learned. He believed that it takes practice and reflection to become a great leader. In war, no matter what the circumstance, Eisenhower said that an officer, "had to preserve optimism in himself and in his command. Without confidence, enthusiasm and optimism in the command, victory is scarcely obtainable."⁸⁴ An officer who was part of Easy Company would experience the same kind of strain when he was given command of his men in the 101st Airborne Division.

Lt. Richard Winters was born in Pennsylvania, on January 21, 1918.⁸⁵ One year before the end of the first World War. Winters trained as a paratrooper in preparation for D-day. He was a part of the 101st Airborne division, 506th PIR, Easy Company.⁸⁶ In his later years, Winters wrote a book titled: *Beyond Band of Brothers: The War Memoirs of Major Dick Winters*. He was close friends with the World War II historian, Stephen Ambrose. Ambrose authored the famed story of the men who were a part of Easy Company. Winters writes, "was I a successful leader? They tell me I was, and modesty prevents me from disagreeing with them...I may not have been the best combat commander, but I always strove to be. My men depended on me to carefully analyze every tactical situation, to maximize the resources that I had at my disposal, to think under pressure, and then to lead them by personal example."⁸⁷ He was driven

by fear of losing men, he desperately wanted to bring as many men home as he possibly could. Winters attended many civic groups, governmental agencies, and other places to speak on the subject of leadership.⁸⁸ He knew there was no set formula for being a great leader because different circumstances call for certain kind of leaders. “Each situation is different and each requires a leader to be flexible in adapting his or her particular leadership style to the specific circumstances required to accomplish any mission. It’s a matter of adjusting to the individual, and you do this every day...”⁸⁹ He does give tips on being a great leader. His first principle on being a leader is not what most people would probably think of first, but it is one of the most important things. Winters advises his listeners to, “strive to be a leader of character, competence, and courage...remain humble. Don’t worry about who receives credit. Never let power or authority go to your head.”⁹⁰ The best kind of leadership begins with a humble spirit. Proverbs 16:18-19 says, “Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”⁹¹ Winters was asked by his grandson if he considered himself a hero. Winters looked at him and said, “no, but I served in a company of heroes.”⁹² These men had a bond that, for those who survived, would last long after the war. They watched their friends die, they experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, and some experienced the joys of seeing the end of the war. No doubt they had what some might call, a brotherhood.

Chapter 8

It's a Brotherhood
"From this day to the ending of the World...

We in it shall be remembered...

We gallant few, we band of brothers.

For he today that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother."⁹³

These young men, these band of brothers, were known for their outstanding courage. What made them a band of brothers? Everything they did, from training to eating they did it together. Through the good times and the bad, they built a bond that would last them a lifetime. These men came from different backgrounds. They came together in 1942 to begin training in Toccoa, Georgia. They trained for something much bigger than they had probably ever imagined they would ever be a part of: D-day.

They all knew they were going into combat, so they trained, and they trained well. Part of their training involved climbing up a hill called Currahee.

TRULY HIS STORY

'Currahee' became the battle cry of the 506th infantry, it means "we stand alone together."⁹⁴ This battle cry reflected how they went into combat together. It required top physical shape to train like these men trained. The first day the men got into Easy Company, Pvt. Ed Tipper said, "I looked up at nearby Mount Currahee and told someone, 'I'll bet that when we finish the training program here, the last thing they'll make us do will be to climb to the top of that mountain.'"⁹⁵ Shortly after Tipper made that remark, the whistle blew and they began running up Currahee. Currahee was three miles up and three miles back down. This would be a normal everyday routine for them for the rest of their training period at Camp Toccoa.

Their D-day objective was to, "[capture] and put out of action a German battery of four 105 mm cannon that were looking down on Utah Beach. The company led the way into Carentan, fought in Holland, held the perimeter at Bastogne, led the counteroffensive in the Battle of the Bulge, fought in the Rhineland campaign, and took Hitler's Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden...it was as good a rifle company as there was in the world."⁹⁶ They lived through combat missions together and that creates a bond that only those who have experienced war can possess. Major Winters writes, "the result of sharing all that stress throughout combat has created a bond between the men of E. company that will last forever."⁹⁷ The three years they spent together in training and combat would not only change their lives, but also the lives of others

9

Chapter 9

Forever Remembered as Heroes: Planning

June 6, 1944; this date serves as a grim reminder that freedom is not free, but a costly endeavor. The cost involved the sacrifice of one of the greatest generations of American men and women, who can be remembered in History as heroes. Why would a generation deliberately be willing to put themselves in such a dire situation; fighting to liberate a group of people they have never met? These brave men put aside fear of death, humbled themselves, trained, and found themselves in the midst of a fight for the freedom and dignity of humanity. Operation Overlord proved to be one of the most crucial missions carried out during World War II. The French resistance played a significant part in the fight for their freedom and the freedom of others. The mission proved to be a hard punch toward bringing Nazi Germany to its bitter end. The people of France were truly grateful for receiving liberation out of the hands of a tyrannical government. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, excellent leadership, teamwork, keen military tactics, careful deliberation, patriotism, and the grace of God, all played a key role in the success of the Allies in executing the greatest amphibious operation in American History. General Eisenhower explains that there were long discussions regarding the technicalities of the operation. No one can better

summarize the plans for Operation Overlord than General Eisenhower. The outline of the intended operation is as follows:

Land on the Normandy Coast.

Build up the resources needed for a decisive battle in the Normandy-Britannia region and break out of the enemy's encircling positions. (Land operations in the first two phases were to be under the tactical direction of Montgomery).

Pursue on a broad front with two army groups, emphasizing the left to gain necessary ports and reach the boundaries of Germany and threaten the Ruhr. On our right we would link up with the forces that were to invade France from the south.

Build up our new base along the western border of Germany, by securing ports in Belgium and in Britannia as well as in Mediterranean.

While building up our forces for the final battles, keep up an unrelenting offensive to the extent of our means, both to wear down the enemy and to gain advantages for the final fighting.

Complete the destruction of enemy forces west of the Rhine, in the meantime constantly seeking bridgeheads across the river.

Launch the final attack as a double envelopment of the Ruhr, again emphasizing the left, and follow this up by an immediate thrust through Germany, with specific direction to be determined at the time.

Clean out the remainder of Germany.⁹⁸

The Allied forces used deception against the German forces as well, this was not an easy task. The goal was to get Germany to divert their troops somewhere different than the actual target. They wanted to get Germany, "to look toward Norway."⁹⁹ Since the Germans were "experts at radio deception" the radio messages had to be discreet, yet believable. There were many radio

CHAPTER 9

deception operations during World War II.

10

Chapter 10

Monique Marie Adelina James

The horrors that the people of France faced would never be forgotten and seared into the minds of French civilians. Their everyday lives would turn into an anticipation for a death sentence for so much as a wrong word spoken or a wrong step taken. Since the arrival of the Germans, the French would be mindful of every move made, because for them it could be their last. Their fate heavily rested on the judgement of the German soldiers. Mrs. Monique Adelina Marie James, just nineteen years of age at the time, lived through the German occupation of France. She grew up in a well-known region of France known as, Normandy. The name of Normandy is held as one of significant importance within the pages of history. Someone who knows the history of Normandy can still hear the cries of men as they lay dying on its beaches.

The invasion known as D-day, is the victory that saved the people of France from the terror of the Germans. Operation Overlord was carried out on June 6th 1944. Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the order of the day saying, “soldiers, sailors, and airmen of the allied Expeditionary Force: You are about to embark on a great crusade, toward which we have striven these many months...you will bring about the destruction of the German war

CHAPTER 10

machine, elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.”¹⁰⁰ Not only did that day save the lives of many French people, it also brought a husband for Mrs. James. Even now at ninety-eight years of age, she recalls those days so clearly and vividly as if the war were yesterday rather than over seventy years ago. When someone goes through such traumatic events, as she did, they do not forget the glimpse of hell seen in the realities of war. Satan is in the business of destroying the lives of people by the millions through powerful leaders. Satan’s handywork is evident during World War II, not only through the lives of the Jewish people, but also in the lives of the French citizens.

Today, at ninety-eight years old, Mrs. Monique Marie Adelina James recalls what it was like when the Germans made their way through France. She lived with her seven brothers and sisters at the time of the German occupation. She grew up in Normandy, France. Her Father had died years earlier working in a mine and her mother had passed away by this time as well. The Germans came down the roads in green military vans. She recalls that, “the first thing they made us do was take our weapons and give them up.” She said they were required to have these special tickets to be able to buy food. She said, “[it] was never enough for all of us.” The French were unable to speak German, so there were in fact many forced gestures made towards them. In many cases, the Germans did whatever they wished. She said, “they only came when they wanted something.” She continued, “[the] Germans did not care unless they wanted something from you.” Although the Germans made them give up their weapons, Mrs. James younger brother was not so quick to follow this order. He kept one rifle hidden within their home, and he hid it well for a short period of time. Mrs. James remembers the Germans coming in and taking her beloved brother away for merely keeping a hidden gun. It was found later that a French girl who lived close to them turned them in when she found out about the hidden weapon. Her brother’s life was spared, but he was taken to a German prison, and it was there that he would remain for the rest of the war. Monique and her brothers and sisters were able to bring him some new clothes and a little food at times. It is not known if

TRULY HIS STORY

the Germans fully approved of this kind of treatment, it is possible that they could have secretly brought a few of these things in while visiting. When Mrs. James was asked to describe the nature of a German prison during the war she said, "they do nothing, [they] just sit there in the room." She said that they would just leave them there, no food or new clothes. Her brother was blessed to be taken away to a prison rather than being shot and killed on the spot. Although he was not killed in an instant, it makes a person wonder how many prisoners laid in their cells slowly awaiting their deaths.

When she was asked how life changed when the Germans came, her replies were astonishing. She was asked what she recalled from that time including sights, feelings, and things that were said. She remembers the things they did to the French people were terrible. Mrs. James says, "The Germans made people dig their own graves before they killed [them]." She recollects that the people she had seen in her community growing up, would disappear overnight. No one asked questions because secretly everyone knew what had happened to them and they did not want to become involved, lest they reach the same fate. There were stories of concentration camps and gas attacks that were heard through whispers across town. The Nazi soldiers put such a fear inside the hearts of the French people that they would fear even taking the wrong step; Nazi soldiers would kill over the simplest issues. It is surprising, after hearing this, that the Germans took her brother to a prison rather than just taking his life then and there. God is sovereign and He protects those He is not done with. At this point in the story, she was asked, "how did the French people feel when the Americans arrived to help fight for your freedom?" With a smile and in a thick French accent she replied, "we were all so happy when Americans came."

She was asked about how she met her husband, who was an American soldier from South Carolina. When did he come over to France? She replied, "he came on June 6th, 1944." When did you meet him, and where? She said, "me and Papa meet in Paris." She said that her and her sister took a trip to Paris to visit a friend living there. Paris is about three hours from Normandy.

CHAPTER 10

Mrs. James and her sister, Natalie, were shopping at a local market when she caught the eye of an American soldier. She was asked if she knew any English at all at the time. She replied, “no I didn’t know any English. Bruce knew a little French.” She was asked how they were able to get to know each other and where they went. She said, “we went to eat in Paris.” She continued, “he asked me for a date after we met that day in the market.” At twenty-four years of age, she was married in France on November 15, 1945. It was not until December of 1946 that she travelled to America. I asked her why she waited so long to join her husband in America? She in turn replied, “they wouldn’t allow newborns on the ships because so many were dying.” She had to wait until her baby boy was old enough to travel. She came to America on a ship by herself, while caring for a baby who was less than a year old. She arrived in New York on Ellis Island. The first thing she remembers when she arrived in New York was trying to find someone who could get her some milk, she had trouble getting people to understand what it was that she wanted. From New York she boarded a train and arrived in Greenville, SC; there, she met her husband and his family. Here she would start her new life, with her new family, and in a country that was completely foreign to her. The last question she was asked was, “What do you miss the most about France?” To which she laughed and replied, “We always had something sweet for breakfast.”¹⁰¹

TRULY HIS STORY



Gibson, Floyd. Bastogne, Belgium. 1944-45. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's private collection.

Pictured above: A gate in Paris, France. Soldiers often received passes to Paris.

CHAPTER 10

She spoke of her husband with such a love that is still heard in her voice today. When she saw him, she could not believe the wonderful truth that someone would care enough for a perfect stranger to cross an ocean to fight for a nation and a people who were completely foreign to him. The fact that he would risk his own life for people he knew nothing about, to her this was amazing. If people would only view others like that today the world would be a different place. Even when he was old and suffered from Alzheimer's disease, it was said of her that she never treated him unkindly or disrespectfully. She was so patient with him, because she knew she owed him so much more than just mere kindness. In her heart, she knew that it was the disease and not the man she fell so much in love with many years earlier. She knew when she looked at him that he was still the same man who came to save her from a life of pain and suffering. Starting a new life in a strange country takes a special kind of person, it takes a strong person to take on that kind of change. I am quite sure she joyfully welcomed the new challenges to come in America. She would get to face these new trials with the love of her life. When you have found the one whom your soul loves, you feel like you could take on a whole lot of new challenges because you have first and foremost Christ, and then each other to lean on. This is a marriage as it should be. It was said of Mrs. James that the sight of a German even after the war made her uncomfortable. In light of what she had to endure, this is understandable. The men who endured the entirety of the war experienced repercussions of the events they witnessed firsthand.

Chapter 11

Bastogne: “The Coldest in Thirty Years”

Bastogne is a name that is remembered as one of the coldest campaigns of World War II. Winters recalled that, “the winter of 1944-45 was the coldest in thirty years.”¹⁰² The 101st Division was involved in a defensive campaign at Bastogne. The men from 6th Division were partly responsible for the liberation of the men trapped behind enemy lines at Bastogne. This major campaign was the toughest campaign for the guys in the 101st Division.¹⁰³ Eisenhower gave orders that Bastogne was to be held at all costs because there were several major roads that derived from that location that were of utmost importance. These guys had their work cut out for them. The days to come would push them to the limit and they would find out what they were really made of.

There were thirty days between the 506th PIR’s arrival at Bastogne and the attack on Noville.¹⁰⁴ On December 19, the 101st Division began heading towards Bastogne. They were ordered to take positions surrounding Bastogne. They had a low amount of supplies needed to sustain the Battalion.¹⁰⁵ As the men of Easy Company moved toward their target, they encountered American soldiers in full retreat. The men who fled were leaving behind their gear. As they passed the men who were running in the opposite direction, they warned the men of Easy company of the dangers ahead.

Winters spoke of the situation and the reaction of his men writing, “I do not remember any of our men saying a single word in reply...We just kept walking toward the firefight that lay somewhere up ahead.”¹⁰⁶ The 2nd Battalion established a line of defense inside the woods and began digging foxholes to sustain them for the days ahead.¹⁰⁷ They quickly set up a communications system between regimental and battalion headquarters to keep everyone informed and up to date on the situation at hand. They received no air support until December 23rd because of weather conditions.¹⁰⁸ They were basically on their own until December 23rd. Winters comments on the situation saying, “being surrounded was nothing new for the 506th. At times we were outnumbered and surrounded on D-Day.”¹⁰⁹ These guys bravely held their line of defense and by God’s grace the Germans moved to another part of the line during that first week.¹¹⁰

The illness that hindered the Bastogne campaign was trench foot and frostbite. Both were battles to be fought in and of themselves. Winters says that, “fully one third of our nonbattle casualties resulted from trench foot and frostbite.”¹¹¹ One of the medics testified to the grim reality of the illness that plagued the soldiers. His name was Eugene Roe and he remembered this particular campaign for the rest of his life.¹¹² Winters remembers, “in Normandy I witnessed lots of stress; some in Holland; but much more at Bastogne due to the cold, lack of sleep, and constant artillery bombardment.”¹¹³ They found it difficult to keep up the mental sanity when the physical exhaustion was deteriorating day by day. Sometimes it seemed as if these men were hanging on by a thread. They carried out orders given by Eisenhower and gave it their all in holding the defense at Bastogne. Help would soon arrive.

A man by the name of Floyd Gibson was part of the Third Army commanded by General George Patton. Gibson served in an engineering group in the “Mighty 6th Division.” He was a part of the twenty-Fifth Armored Engineer Battalion, company “A.”¹¹⁴ Gibson trained at Fort Knox, Kentucky.¹¹⁵ Ironically, he was trained as a cook in Kentucky; a position he would never get to practice in the Army. He was transitioned to England on a ship called the *Queen Elizabeth II*.¹¹⁶ Gibson described the ship as being extremely crowded.

TRULY HIS STORY

The ship was packed with soldiers, and Gibson mentioned that the men were not allowed to go onto the deck. Gibson got seasick and forced his way out to the deck to get fresh air, regardless of the command. He had no more problems for the remainder of the trip after that moment of fresh air. Gibson and the others landed in Scotland and made their way to southern England.¹¹⁷ Gibson was located near Southampton, where he was trained for a few weeks. After training and the action seen during D-day Gibson would experience more hard times ahead. Gibson's son, Andy remembers, "he and his father watching *Saving Private Ryan* together, and his father commented on the D-day scene saying 'that's about right.' "¹¹⁸



Gibson, Floyd. Bastogne, Belgium. 1944. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's Private collection.

Above left: A soldier attempting to bathe himself in the freezing cold.

Above right: A foxhole being dug during the days in Bastogne.

Gibson spent a good amount of his time driving and transporting troops. He recalled that one of the hardest experiences he had was in being a part of the group that assisted in liberating the 101st Division from Bastogne. He told

CHAPTER 11

his children that he went for 36 hours without sleep during the effort to assist the 101st in the Ardennes. Any sleep he got after that was in a foxhole under the snow. He carried a Brownie camera with him everywhere he went and was able to capture moments in Bastogne and other locations during the war. He captured moments in history that will stand the test of time. He would soon realize that his experiences were not as bad when compared to what so many had gone through in concentration camps.

12

Chapter 12

Horrors of the Holocaust

On April 11 of 1945, the men of the “mighty 6th armored division”¹¹⁹ came across something that would give them nightmares for years to come, if not for the rest of their lives. These young boys had lived through the combat at Omaha beach and endured the cold at Bastogne, but no one could have prepared them for what they were about to witness. They would soon fully understand vile reality of what they were fighting against. After discovering the concentration camp near Landsberg Winters thought to himself, “now I know why I am here!”¹²⁰ No words can truly describe the atrocities that took place within these concentration camps. After General Eisenhower encountered Ohrdruf he said in a press conference, “when I found the first camp like that, I think I never was so angry in my life. The bestiality displayed there was not merely piled up bodies of people that had starved to death, but to follow out the road and see where they tried to evacuate them so they could still work, you could see where they sprawled on the road. You could go to their burial pits and see horrors that really I wouldn’t even want to begin to describe. I think people ought to know about such things. It explains something of my attitude toward the German war criminal. I believe he must be punished, and I will hold out for that forever.”¹²¹ As terrible as the reality of it is, people should be aware

of such evils. Buchenwald was second only to Auschwitz on the scale of destruction.¹²²

The Gestapo headquarters warned the Nazi administration at Buchenwald that the Allied forces were headed toward the camp. The Gestapo sent in explosives to blow up evidence of the camp, little did they know that most of the Nazi's had already fled the camp in fear of the Allies, while leaving everything behind them as it was. What is interesting is that, "a prisoner answered the phone and informed headquarters that explosives would not be needed, as the camp had already been blown up, which, of course, was not true."¹²³ There were Nazi's who opted to stay and fight because they would not give in to the Americans.¹²⁴ As the troops moved closer toward an area called Weimar, Germany, they stumbled upon a German Concentration Camp called Buchenwald. As the Americans approached the camp, the prisoners joyfully made their way towards them, only to be shot down by the Germans on guard.¹²⁵ When the Americans arrived, they immediately shot a German officer when they found him. Gibson said he was a fighter and that he refused to stop fighting. These prisoners had been stripped of everything that made them appear to be human. Could these really be people? How could someone be treated like this?



Gibson, Floyd. Ettersberg, Germany. 1945. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's private collection. Pictured above:Prisoners shot by the Germans when the Americans took

The Americans often carried chocolate with them and they were happy to give these starving victims anything they could to help. Unfortunately, these prisoners were so malnourished that their bodies reacted in a terrible way. Some of them died as a result of merely eating Chocolate.¹²⁶ This was just the beginning of what they would find. The men of the 6th Division were ordered to make German civilians witness what took place in their own backyard. The Germans were jerked out of their homes and ordered to see what had happened to these people. Not only that, but they were also required to dig the graves of the people who were beaten and murdered.



Gibson, Floyd. Ettersberg, Germany. 1945. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's private collection.

Above left: Bodies awaiting Burial.

Above right: German civilians burying the prisoners who were murdered.

Surprisingly, one of the most gruesome stories to come out of this concen-

CHAPTER 12

tration camp was caused by a camp commandant's wife. Her name was Ilse Koch and her dealings with the prisoners were sadistic in nature. She, "often beat prisoners with a riding crop, and collected lampshades, book covers, and gloves made from the skin of camp victims."¹²⁷ Gibson was sure to document the atrocities that he witnessed that day. He took pictures of the furnaces that were used to burn bodies, the gallows where they hung prisoners, fire pits where they pinned their victims down with logs and set them ablaze, and piles of bodies that appeared to be merely skin and bones. It was discovered that they did medical experiments on the prisoners to test the effects of various infections and vaccines.¹²⁸ Imagine being a twenty-one-year old kid and walking into something like this. In a time like this people learned to grow up faster than they thought possible. Mr. Gibson's son, Mel Gibson, remembers his father having nightmares about this day months after the war.¹²⁹ The Bible says, "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done and there is no new thing under the sun."¹³⁰



Gibson, Floyd. Ettersberg, Germany. 1945. Courtesy of Melvin Gibson's private collection.

Pictured above: Bodies of the prisoners shot by the Germans and awaiting burial.

By this time, these men had experienced war like they had never seen before, yet they were sick to their stomachs when they saw how these inmates were treated. Today, some refuse to believe that this happened, despite the evidence. Americans are blind to the fact that something like this is taking place within their own country. Hitler drilled it into the minds of his followers that the Jewish people were something less than Human. Similarly, in schools today some teach that babies in the womb are not fully human. Therefore, if parents of an unwanted child believe the baby will cause an inconvenience in their own lives, they justify the murder of their child because a deranged doctor claims that the child is not in fact, a child. The victims of abortions many times have their arms and legs torn and they can feel the pain just as much as any other human being. The only difference is that the child cannot scream out in protest. So many Americans have made the choice to murder their baby, before the child even has a chance to become a lawyer, a writer, an artist, an athlete, and much more, they have stolen these rights from their own flesh and blood. Why resort to murder? There are a countless number of women who desperately want children, but are unable to have babies. The world would be a better place if the government funded adoptions rather than abortions.

Democrats today want to compare climate change to World War II.¹³¹ What an insult that is to those men who fought and died protecting our country from the atrocities of concentration camps. Democrats want to fight climate change, yet they support the real repetition of World War II, which is taking place in abortion clinics across the United States. American citizens have a responsibility to protect those who cannot fight for themselves. Abortion clinics are the concentration camps of 2020. Americans have it in their blood to fight for those who are weak, they did it in 1945 and they can and should do it now. Jeremiah 1:5 says, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”¹³²

13

Chapter 13

Conclusion: Truly His Story

Looking through the stories of the lives of people who lived during World War II is evidence that the world is a merciless place, but there is Hope in the One who extends His mercy and Grace to men freely. Throughout history God has revealed that He loves human beings and desires a relationship with them. He has given men a way out of their sinful position and that is far more than anyone deserves. It is far more than anything anyone could ask for. How can Christians believe God when there is so much evil in the world? Christians believe God because He is loving and Faithful and He has given us a way out of this world and into His presence. He has offered man the free gift of Salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. History is just a story of men searching for something other than God to fill them with purpose and happiness. God offers peace and rest to those who seek it, if they just turn to Him in Faith. In the end, God will sum up all things in Christ.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto

you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”¹³³

The study of history reveals not only the sinful nature of men, but also the loving and faithful nature of the Creator, who is also our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”¹³⁴ Believers have no reason to fear anything in this life because this life is not their hope. Their hope is in their Savior Jesus Christ and spending an eternity with Him.

14

Chapter 14

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CHAPTER 14

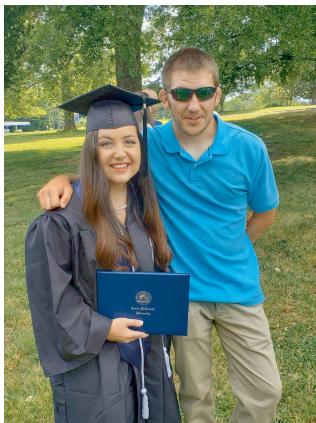
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