

## THE GOERING INCIDENT (APPREHENDED)

This incident began two days after the German army surrendered. Brig. General Robert Stack, Assistant Commander of the 36th Inf. Division, called me on the phone. He told me to report to Division Hdqs. immediately for instructions on a mission involving a high ranking German official (Herman Goering).

Then I reported to Gen. Stack at Division Hdqs., I was introduced to a German Major of the Luftwaffa who was the guide for the Goring party. Stack told me he needed a combat unit to go with him and the German Major for the rendezvous. The 3rd Platoon of Rcn. Co. 636th T.D. Br. was the only combat unit I had in the town where Div. Hdqs. and my company C.P. was located.

Gen. Stack told me that the I. and R. platoon of the 142d was available to go with us on the rendezvous. 2d Lt. Jerome Shapiro was the officer with that platoon and desired to go. Stack said I'll leave it up to you- if you need him, Okeh and if you don't want him that is okeh also. Not knowing what we would be facing I felt the extra man-power would help on the mission because we would be going about 70 miles into an area still occupied by armed German troops.

The party that was on the mission included the following: The Luftwoffa Major in his Mercedes, General Stack in his sedan, myself and driver, the 3d platoon with four jeeps and two armored cars (M-8s), Shapiro and his two jeeps.

We headed out through the Austrian gap of the Alps. The Major with his Mercedes took off at a good clip and it was difficult to stay with him because of the armored cars. I called my armored cars and jeeps on the radio and told them to keep coming, that I was going to stay with the Mercedes and Stack and then I lost radio contact.

After a little more than one hour we arrived at a castle in the area of Zell (near Kitzbuhl) the place for the rendezvous. The castle and surrounding area was occupied by an S.S. regiment commanded by Oberst Fegerlein. A lunch was provided by the German unit. Stack and his aide, myself and Shapiro and maybe other U.S. soldiers, Colonel Fegerlein and his staff were also present. Conversation was somewhat limited because of the language barrier, however there was an S.S. captain who spoke good English which was a good help in conversation. I believe he told me that he had attended school in the U.S.

After an hour or so part of the party continued on and made contact in a wooded area with the Goering group at around 10 p.m.- it was dark. Everyone then proceeded back to the castle where Goering, his wife and daughter and other members of his party were billeted for the night. Pictures, interviews and a lot of gawking was in process for maybe a couple of hours before we retired for the night.

Prior to retiring Stack met with Goering and the interpreter and Goering gave him the story of the last month of the war. Right after that Stack briefed me on what he had learned and his plans for the morrow.

He told me of Goering falling out of favor with Hitler and being imprisoned and Hitler's planning to execute him by a firing squad. His Luftwaffe rescued him and from then till now he was in hiding. He was somewhat concerned about the S.S. regiment billeted in that area because the officer in charge was the nephew of a General Fegerlein who was not the best of friends with Goering and of course, the S.S. was Hitler's elite troops.

Stack also told me that he wanted to tour the area early in the morning for any loot or whatever. In order to get ahead of the general I decided to tour the area that night- the German captain was my guide. We entered a barracks occupied by troops and they were good looking soldiers. I felt rather small in the presence of those 6 foot-plus soldiers. however Sgt. Probst was with me and he added to the situation. Not very much was present in the way of loot. We did get some lugers, however.

I allowed the German troops to retain their arms that night, but they would be picked up the next morning. I did that because of an uncertain situation where there were a considerable number of displaced persons (Russians and Poles). Stack had previously charged me with the responsibility of protecting Goering and his party at the risk of our own security.

Nothing much happened during the night. I spent some time with the German S.S. officers discussing the world situation and why Germany felt they could take on the U.S. and win. Their feeling was that the U.S. would never be brought into a war in Europe again after W.W.I. Shapiro was in his glory and making the most of it. Because of his background and being from New York City he left no stone unturned. The New York City papers really had a hay-day, I was told.

The next morning as Goering was being taken from the castle on the way to General Patch's headquarters (7th Army Commander), there was a lot of picture-taking, gawking and some tears from some of the German soldiers of Goering's party. Stack was talking with Goering through the American sergeant interpreter and apparently Goering was interested in meeting the officer in charge of the security.

Stack motioned for me to come forward and meet Goering. As I approached the Field Marshal he stepped forward, gave me the Heil Hitler salute and extended his hand for a handshake. I returned the salute (U.S. style) and shook his hand. As I shook his hand, he talked in his language to me. Tears were coming from his eyes. The interpreter was telling me what he said. He thanked me for pro-

viding security for himself and his party and requested that his wife and daughter ( about 6 years) be made safe. I assured him that the security would be maintained.

When I escorted Gen. Stack through the area we observed many side arms. Of course, Stack wanted some of the troops back at Division Hdqs. to get souvenirs and he told me to have them sent back to his headquarters. I knew what was there because I had inspected them the night before. There were approximately 25 lugers and P 38's with holsters and there were also a box of probably 100 or more of 25s,32s,22s, etc.(small pistols without holsters). Stack commented, "See that your men get a souvenir." I took him at his word and gave my men the choice pistols and took the box back to Div. Hdqs. You can bet that I didn't deliver them to Stack personally, but left them at the gate of Hdqs. with the M.P.'s.

Lt. "Bull" Wilson indicated that later on after I returned to my company and left him in charge someone from Div. Hdqs. came to the castle looking for the pistols and indicated the General was a little unhappy. Sez La Gurerre.

*Golden C. Sill*  
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