

MOOLENAAR

With a smile and a tear



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The life story of Erik Moolenaar (1922 - 2005)
Extracts from part 2 - The war-years (1938 - 1945)
(basic version)

Genealogie Moolenaar

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Genealogie Moolenaar

To whom it may concern,

This is an extract from the second part of 'with a smile and a tear', the life story of Erik Moolenaar (1922 – 2005). This part deals with the period 1938 - 1945.

Although the information may contain errors and ambiguities, raise questions or leave them unanswered Erik, to the best of his knowledge, wrote down a great deal of the content himself in 1988.

Erik's family has decided that his story (for genealogical use only) can freely be used in a positive way to serve history. All original photos, insofar as they do not come from public sources, are the property of the Moolenaar family. Citation of source is mandatory in all cases of re-use or copying of text and other content. Quotes from others than Erik Moolenaar may only be used with permission of them or their inheritants.

Under no circumstances the work may be changed.

Donald Guy Elmer Moolenaar
Drachten, September 10, 2021.

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Note:

This basic version of part 2 of the life story from Erik Moolenaar is specially edited for the use by 'Tankdestroyer.net'.

Front page picture: Coat of arms of the Moolenaar-family 'from the Beemster'; designed and registered in 1987 by Erik Moolenaar after completing his family-tree.

What happened can't really happen, but it happened anyway.

Dedicated to:

NIKLAS FRANK

The man Erik always wanted to meet,
but could not find.

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Preface

Purely by coincidence (one of my students was late for her class), I read the review of a book written by Philippe Sands, professor of international law at University College London and director of the Center on International Courts and Tribunals. This book, *The Rat Line*, is about the flight and mysterious death of Nazi officer Otto von Wächter.

Because of the life story of my father and as a family genealogist, I am especially interested in World War II Southern Germany, so I read the review further than usual. In addition, I saw that the reviewer quoted yet another book by the same author, *"East West Street"*, which deals with human rights lawyers Raphael Lemkin and Hersch Lauterpacht (the originators of the terms "genocide" and "crimes against humanity"), and Hans Frank, Hitler's lawyer and leader of the Nazi occupation in Poland. This name has, as far as I can remember, been heard very often in our family; my father was, as an interpreter, part of the 3-men AMG-team that arrested Hans Frank in Southern Germany.

Thanks to the internet, I quickly got hold of Philippe Sands' e-mail address and sent him an e-mail about it. He promptly replied: ("Dear Guy, totally fascinating...") He introduced me to Hans' youngest son Niklas, whose name I also knew from the book he wrote about his father in 1986. This book prompted my father to write down his memories of this arrest. I also know that my father tried to get in touch with Niklas through the publisher of the book and the - at the time rudimentary - internet, but unfortunately he did not succeed. He was very sorry because he really wanted to meet him. Shortly after writing his memoirs, his illness worsened and he was unable to make any further contact attempts.

My father died in 2005. Now, 15 years later, history has taken hold and contact has developed between the two sons Niklas and Guy. Indeed: "totally fascinating"

In July 2021, I found out that history had another trick up its sleeve. After a long search I was able to track down one of the relatives of the first US soldier my father met on his escape-journey from the workcamp towards freedom; Master Sergeant in the 636 TD Btn. Douglas Fairbanks Ables.

Genealogical data

ERIK MOOLENAAR was part of the 10th generation of the MOOLENAAR-family, whose origins lie in the 'Beemsterpolder'¹ and of which the first generation dates from around 1600.

Erik was the only child of FREDERIK NICOLAAS MOOLENAAR and JUSTINA FREDERIKA VAN LUNTEREN. He was named after both his father and mother ('Frederik' and 'Frederica'). He was born in The Hague, Netherlands on Sunday 06-08-1922. His profession was export-manager of a large paint factory in The Hague. He passed away in Drachten on 15-10-2005.

While alive he was the bearer of the gold medal of honor of the Order of Oranje-Nassau (Royal Decree 57, dated February 27, 1982), the silver and gold Jacobs staff of the Dutch Scout Association (23/4/1962 and 23/4/1968) and the American European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two campaign stars (1944/1945). He was also entitled to a USA Purple Heart and the USA World War 2 Victory Medal (both 1944/1945).

On 21-07-1948, Erik married HELENA MARIA PETRONELLA DE VOS (Leny), born in The Hague, Netherlands on 26-08-1925. Occupation: employee Royal Dutch Airlines, daughter of ALBERT DE VOS and ELISABETH CORNELIA VAN DER KRUK.

Erik and Leny raised two sons: DONALD GUY ELMER MOOLENAAR, born in The Hague, Netherlands 22-09-1950 and TERENCE PATRICK RICHARD MOOLENAAR, born in The Hague, Netherlands 29-9-1955.

They also got three grandchildren: NIENKE MARCELLA MOOLENAAR, RALPH ALEXANDER MOOLENAAR and JURGEN CHRISTIAAN MOOLENAAR.

¹ Just north of Amsterdam

Additional data – For use by Tankdestroyer.net

Family name : Moolenaar, Erik
Nationality : Dutch
Date of birth : 06-08-1922
Place of birth : The Hague, Netherlands
Fathers full name : Moolenaar, Frederik Nicolaas
Mothers full name : van Lunteren, Justina Frederika
Early schools attended : Primary schools the Hague (NL)
College attended : Geurt Volkers-college, The Hague
Year of graduation : 1938
Jobs before WW2 : Analyst paint factory, the Hague (NL)
Wife's maiden name : de Vos, Helena Maria Petronella
Wife's father name : de Vos, Albert
Wife's mothers name : van der Kruk, Elisabeth Cornelia
Wife's place of birth : The Hague (Netherlands), 26-08-1925
Honoree's marriage date : The Hague, 21-07-1948
City and state of residence : deceased
Children's names /birthyear : See below
Jobs after ww2 : Export manager paint factory, the Hague (NL)
Hobbies : Scouting, collecting stamps and coins, genealogy.
Organizations/memberships : see below
Date of death : Drachten (the Netherlands), October 15, 2005
Place buried : Ashes scattered 15-09-2006 at Heegermeer (NL) in position 52-56-39,4N 005-34-40,8 E. Findagrave ID 228481433.

TD unit served with : 636 TD
Places stationed : Alsace (France)
Awards : see below
Highest rank : Pfc (titular)
Additional information : none

Contact

Name / relationship : Moolenaar, Donald Guy Elmer (eldest son)
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Telephone number : ++31 6 42319303
Address : Voorhuis 96, 9205 BW Drachten, the Netherlands

Children:

- DONALD GUY ELMER MOOLENAAR, born in The Hague, Netherlands 22-09-1950
- TERENCE PATRICK RICHARD MOOLENAAR, born in The Hague, Netherlands 29-9-1955.

Awards

While alive he was the bearer of the gold medal of honor of the Order of Oranje-Nassau (Royal Decree 57, dated February 27, 1982), the silver and gold Jacobs staff of the Dutch Scout Association (23/4/1962 and 23/4/1968) and the American European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two campaign stars (1944/1945). He was also entitled to a USA Purple Heart and the USA World War 2 Victory Medal (both 1944/1945). (He never officially got these awards because he left the US Army in august 1945)

Summary – War in Europe

To start, I will go straight to the point and let Erik speak for himself. He wrote this intro to his life story in 1988:

“The German occupiers forced the Dutch men into compulsory work in the German war industry. I managed to get out of this for a long time, but finally I too had to leave on July 28, 1943. After 17 hours on the road, the train arrived in the recently bombed city of Mannheim and all the boys had to get off, except the 'craftsmen' seated in the front (welders etc.) who were going to go to Strasbourg. Me and a few other boys decided that Strasbourg would be a far safer place than our destination in the 'Ruhr-area' and in the chaos on the platform, we managed to reach that part of the train that would take us to Strasbourg.

After arriving at the factory at Schiltigheim in Alsace, people there at first did not know what to do with the newly arrived boys, who were no metal workers. Later we heard that the factory management feared difficulties if we were to be returned, and so we were placed as 'Hilfsarbeiter'² among the fitters: supplying and removing materials, clearing blockages on the conveyor belts, etc. A beautiful job to draw the line and to commit (carefully!) some sabotage, especially at night during the night shifts that alternated every other week”.

“After the successful invasion of the allied armies in June 1944, things got tense in the camp and the factory as there were also Alsatians working in the factory. Before the war, Alsace was French territory, but in 1940 it had become German territory again and the population had been made into 'Reich Germans'. At heart, however, they had remained French and they enjoyed it when the few Dutchmen, who had learned French at school, talked to them in that language (which was strictly forbidden, by the way)”.

From them, Erik and his new friend and partner in distress Jan van Gemert got tips on how to get out and where to hide until the arrival of the allied units. At last, during a bombardment on the factory, Erik succeeded in escaping from the camp and reached the US forces of the 36th Infantry Division. Knowing a little about the area, Erik was able to show an American unit how (via backroads) to reach the munitions factory where he had worked; it therefore fell undamaged into the hands of the Allies.

Jan also joined the US army and they stayed with the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion until the Allies forced the crossing over the Rhine river. Having undergone a reliability check, their presence at 636 had become known to the headquarters of the 36th U.S. Infantry Division. Attached to that headquarters was a 'Military Government Section' under the command of Lt. Colonel Grady C. Durham, who 'claimed' Erik and Jan when he learned that both were fluent in 4 languages. Their school German, French, and English had passed into practical language for both of them: German while working in the factory, French from dealing with Alsatians and English during the time they had spent at 636 TD. They were added to Mil. Govt. Officers: Erik from then on marched with Captain (later Major) Philip Broadhead within the 36th Division's range of action and Jan worked together with Captain Cohen.

² Handyman

As an interpreter, Erik had to deal with many issues related to services to replace government tasks that could no longer be performed by Germans. Furthermore, data needed to be collected about the thousands of forced laborers who only wanted one thing: to go home, if necessary under their own power.

But the latter could not be tolerated: tens of thousands of wandering people on their way to all corners of the world, who could only obtain food by robbing and with no medical care: it was not always easy to convince them of the impossibility of immediate return.

Erik was given other tasks after one of the concentration camps was liberated, but there was one action he always remembered fondly: the capture of Hans Frank, the Nazi Governor-General of Poland and the translation of the first interrogation of this war criminal.

Of course, Erik and Jan also wanted to go home, but the underlying intention was to say goodbye only temporarily: with their trackrecord they would have been granted entry into the USA, without much difficulty. Provided with papers to open the way for this, they departed on the 4th August 1945 from Geislingen, Southern Germany, towards the Netherlands. A captured German Mercedes 170 was made available to them as well as sufficient petrol and food. They were also given civilian clothes, which one of the sergeants had found in a tailor's workshop that had been partially in ruins. In the evening they reached the Dutch border where they had to hand over the car to the military authorities (*"It was simply too beautiful"*, Erik said later). And: *"we had to wait for transport options to The Hague: there was a lot of waiting at the various transfer points, but three days later, on August 8, we were home at last. Luckily our families and their homes survived the war, which was more than I can say about almost half of The Hague. It only dawned on me after a few days: I had survived the war"*.

Into darkness

For Erik, the war started on August 6, 1938 when, sixteen years old and supported by his brand new experiences in the Boy Scouts organization, he became more or less aware of the seriousness of the developing political situation in Europe. He would not have realized at the time that this did not only concern Europe, but that the same developments were taking place in Eastern Asia: Japan was so far away that he did not realize this until December 7th. 1941 *"Now all hell is going to break loose"*, as he himself said...

In his memoirs Erik wrote: *"Threat of war in Europe: No one believes that the Netherlands will be able to stay out of it this time too, and in impotent rage you ask yourself: what can I do if the need arises? Fight? Not likely. Keep and/or restore order? Yes, if trained and with authority"*.

'Be Prepared' he had learned as a Boy Scout and that is exactly what he did. He decided to become a member of the 'Haagsche Burgerwacht'³ as soon as his age would make this possible.



Erik (second from the left) as a member of the Civil Guard group in The Hague, 1939
(Original foto Erik Moolenaar, may 1940)

Despite his young age, Erik already sensed that things would go wrong and, as he later said, mapped out a plan for his future. However, he could not have imagined in his wildest dreams that any plan would not survive the first contact with the enemy and how bad the situation would become.

³ Since the threats of a communist uprising in the years after the Great War, all over the country there were Civil Guard groups active in support of the Government.

Genealogie Moolenaar



Autumn 1939: An exercise in the dunes near 'Kijkduin'. Erik is on the right in the photo, next to the drinking man. His helmet and rifle are on the ground in front of him.
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1940)

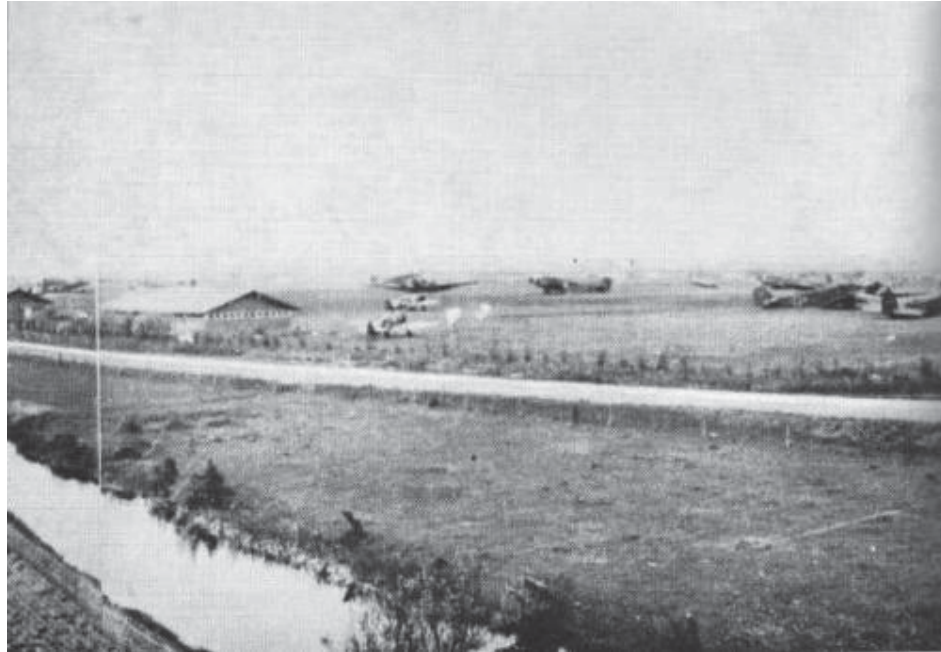
So, in 1938 already, he tried to join the 'Haagsche Burgerwacht', which was actually a mature continuation of his status as a Boy Scout. However, he was too young; he was not allowed to join the organization until he was 21, i.e August 6, 1943. As the political situation worsened more and more and eventually the threat of war became so great, that it was decided to lower the entry age and admit more potential members. Therefore, on September 22, 1939, Erik became a 'temporary member' of the 'Mobile Colonne', 'Vendel 4' of the armed department of the Civil Guard of The Hague.



Membershipcard from Erik Moolenaar (original document september 1939)

He was given a uniform (which was far from comfortable as he said), a helmet, a gun (a remnant from the first world war, probably a 5-shot Hembrug Mannlicher M95 cal. 6.5 mm, a length of almost 130 cm and a weight of 4.2 kilograms) and a 60 cm long bajonet. Two, sometimes three times a week he was trained by retired former army-officers in the basics of civil protection, which often consisted of nothing more than rear run into each other with a loud 'bang! bang!' call....

His last training was on May 8, 1940 in the dunes near the small secondary airfield of 'Ockenburg'. Little could he know that, less than two days later, this trainingground would be the scene of chaos, war and death.



Ockenburg airfield 1940.

The storm is rising

It was no real surprise. Military units and defense posts were on alert during the night of Thursday 9 to Friday 10 May and the Dutch Government took a German ultimatum seriously. After a personal warning from Commander-in-Chief Winkelman, Queen Wilhelmina had gone to sleep in her air-raid shelter in the garden of the Royal Palace, just a few hundred meters from Erik's house.



And yet it was a great shock to everyone when Germany indeed attacked, also because it was not foreseen that the enemy would immediately strike in so many places and so massively, right in the heart of the 'Fortress Holland'.

German paratroopers descending over The Hague (may 10, 1940)

Near The Hague, in Rotterdam, near Dordrecht, north and south of the 'Moerdijk bridges': paratroopers descended everywhere. Planes full of German troops landed around The Hague and in Rotterdam. At dawn, a shocked Erik saw them come down and, from behind the 'safe' window of his room, he heard the first gunfire; the battle for the Netherlands had begun.

It was not until much later that it became known that the Netherlands had been warned with great certainty by Major Sas, the military attaché in Berlin, with the words *"tomorrow morning at daybreak"* on May 9. He got his information from an officer of the German secret service Abwehr, who found Hitler's warlike politics disastrous. He had already warned several times in the previous period and each time it had turned out to be a false alarm. This was because Hitler had shifted the start date of 'Fall Gelb' just as many times for various reasons. This happened, for example, in November 1939, when the Dutch army was also on high alert.

In the days immediately leading up to May 10, this problem recurred as Hitler again shifted the exact date of attack at the last minute due to weather forecasts. But there were many more signs of impending doom. For example, the Vatican secretly warned Belgium and the Netherlands that a German attack was imminent. On 7 May it was therefore decided to cancel almost all military leave. Erik's unit was also put on high alert, but in the end could not take action because from day one on, the armed struggle took place in - and in the immediate vicinity of The Hague, and the Civil Guards were not trained for that. On May 8, the acute danger seemed to diminish, but on Thursday evening, May 9 and the following night, the indications of an enemy attack became more and more concrete. On the German side of the border, troop movements and all sorts of other disturbing activities were observed.

The Dutch General Winkelman ordered that from three o'clock in the morning all eligible troops and positions had to be ready. The general himself went to his house in Wassenaar to 'get a few more hours of sleep'.

A questionable decision it turned out later, but the Commander in Chief was confident. *"The 'gentlemen' could come"*, he said on departure, *"we have done everything we can"*. That was not completely incomprehensible. After all, the armed forces were alarmed and moreover, after the mobilization at the end of August 1939, had been able to prepare themselves for more than eight months.

After the German attack on Denmark and Norway in April, extra measures had been taken against possible operations by enemy paratroopers and airborne troops, although this was only based on small-scale raiding actions. The Netherlands also counted on help from French and British armed forces and, like in WW1, that in Belgium and in the north of France the Allies again would prove to be a match for the Wehrmacht.

"Far too many 'ifs' and 'buts'; this cannot end well for us" Erik wrote, and he was right about that, because the Netherlands formed only a small side-stage in the larger whole of the military showdown for Germany, France and Great Britain.

It was clear that something was going on in the night of 9 to 10 May. Large numbers of German aircraft were sighted over the Netherlands. But the aircraft seemed to be on their way to England⁴, because they were flying towards the North Sea. The Moolenaar- residents of the Kamperfoeliestraat 185 did not sleep that night, because nightly listeners could follow the messages from the Air Watch Service 'live', as they were announced via the radio. Scattered across the country were a large number of observation posts, largely manned by volunteers, to observe enemy aircraft. When aircraft were spotted, the number, type and direction of flight had to be communicated by telephone. The messages collected in this way were read out on the radio so that all military and civilians involved were informed at once. A major disadvantage was that the listening citizens became quite nervous and that also the Germans listened in....

It was war and the Germans had used a stratagem. Over the North Sea, the bombers had turned around and then unexpectedly struck from the west into 'Fortress Holland'.

Erik and his parents knew that in the region of The Hague, in addition to the airports and the Royal House, the military camp Waalsdorp and the Alexander barracks, both within cycling distance of their home, could be important targets. Especially Erik's father suspected that there would be massive fighting in and around The Hague.⁵ The air raids, which started just after 4 a.m., were part of the raid on the Dutch government and command center. The consequences were terrible. The military units stationed at both locations were not among the units on alert (!) and were mostly surprised in their sleep. Dozens of soldiers were killed or injured. A number of civilians, who were out in the streets in large numbers to see what was going on, got into crossfire and were also killed.

⁴ England was already at war with Germany since september 3, 1939

⁵ He was right, but also he could not have imagined that it started on day 1 already!

However, when the first bullets whistled through the streets, everyone hastily disappeared into the safety of their cellars. The battle took place in the dunes near the airports of Ockenburg (just over 2 kilometers away from Erik's bed), Ypenburg (5 km) and Valkenburg (15 km), in the area around the village of Wassenaar (4 km) and the Royal Palace 'Huis ten Bosch' (3 km).

All around Erik's hometown there was fighting and while lots of young boys like Erik were sitting in their cellars without being able to do anything, Dutch soldiers were killed just a few hundred meters away. The Dutch army pushed the invaders back into a few pockets of resistance and held out quite well for days. They made it very difficult for the Germans. So difficult in fact, that they decided on the dastardly bombardment of Rotterdam after which, under threat that Utrecht would be the next target, The Netherlands had to give up.

Tuesday afternoon, May 14, Rotterdam was mercilessly bombed by the Germans and almost completely destroyed. About 850 people (mostly innocent civilians, were killed and at least 25,000 homes and 11,000 other properties were destroyed. Only important government buildings such as the town hall and the prison were spared because the Nazis needed them themselves.

Helpless, Erik and thousands others saw the sky colour brightly red towards Rotterdam. *"We just couldn't believe this was caused by burning Rotterdam 25 km away"*, he said. The city burned for two weeks. The next day, May 15, The Netherlands capitulated and the Queen fled to England.

Erik didn't write much about those early days of the war. He was also not called up by the Civil Guard; the chaos was simply too great everywhere and within a couple of days it turned out that there was no way to stop it. That he, like everyone else, was very busy with all that was happening is apparent from the booklet with newspaper clippings that he left behind. On the first day of the war, well before normal morning hours, he was on the street with hundreds of others, wondering what was going on. Hundreds of German planes, accompanied by the roar and chatter of anti-aircraft guns and later the sounds of man-to-man fighting around Ockenburg: *"I was shocked"*, he said.

After the war Erik wrote: *"We weren't ready at all. Holland, as it was then called, started, thanks to the utterly incapable government⁶, the Second World War poorly armed and with a completely untrained army. When we were attacked on May 10, 1940, we had a total of 280,000 soldiers under arms, of which most soldiers were reservists or mobilized civilians"*.

⁶ Commander Dijkhoorn was the Dutch Defense Minister. A vain man, who was very convinced of himself. He interfered very intensively and substantively in military policy in an improper manner. He personally intervened in strategic issues and gave in his own way 'priority' to equipment purchases. It had been Dijkhoorn himself - still as a subordinate of the very capable general Reynders (!) - who considered tanks a useless purchase. As an officer, he advised the government already negatively about the purchase of tanks. Both the invasion of Poland and the invasion of the west proved this otherworldly and incapable official completely wrong. As Minister of Defence, due to a strategy-conflict, he even managed to fire one of the the only capable generals in the Dutch army, Commander-in-Chief Reijnders.

“Well, arms.... In total, due to years and years of budget-cuts, our army had at its disposal: no tanks, 32 armoured cars (of which 2 command cars with a wooden dummy canon(!), 13.000 (mostly claimed) civilian busses and trucks, lots of bikes, over 30.000 horses and ammunition for a maximum of five days. The only thing we had more than enough of were pigeons. For communications between Headquarters and front troops....”.

He continues: *“Navy and airforce were quite modern, The Dutch airforce consisted of 126 operational fighterplanes. All in all, this very modest yacht fleet was fairly modern in nature but she was only much too small (only 75 planes were operational on may 10, 1940) to be a real threat to the Luftwaffe”.*

“The anti-aircraft guns were quite modern an were very successful. However there was not enough ammunition: An inventory in January 1940 indicated that the anti-aircraft defenses would run out of ammunition within a week of war. Later that appeared to be an optimistic count... Some rapid firing guns already ran out of ammo after two days...”

Shortly after the fighting started, Erik wrote: *“During the first day of the fighting already, people in the streets told all kinds of sinister stories about the German paratroopers that threatened their city. They would wear Dutch uniforms or dress up as farmers, nuns, priests or ministers”.*

Such reports were typical of the great fear that German soldiers and Germans living in The Netherlands would use that kind of treacherous behaviour. They would also be helped by domestic Nazi accomplices, in particular by Anton Mussert's NSB-members. That subversive activities were taken seriously was not surprising in itself, especially after the events in Norway a month ago and the actions there of the traitor Quisling. In addition, indications were found in captured documents for possible assistance to the airborne troops by Germans living in The Hague, although it has always remained unclear whether this actually happened - and if so, to what extent. Fact is that in The Hague and elsewhere, fear of treasonous actions caused great nervousness and panicked shootings took place.

The fighting in May 1940 was soon overshadowed by the further course of the Second World War and by the probing and violent events that occurred in the Netherlands during the years of occupation. A number of senior officers immediately began gathering precise information about the course of the battle in May 1940. Even during the war, the Military Spectator, the magazine for officers, but now read by thousands of civilians, published articles on important battle scenes. The Germans allowed this for some time, on the condition, among other things, that 'the enemy' was not spoken of as 'the enemy' – i.e. the Germans - but more neutrally. After the war, the meticulous reconstruction of the battle would culminate in an extensive series of official battle reports and books.

Erik again: *“Those days in May were an impressive event for everyone. It was suddenly war, an equally unknown - see the examples of hundreds of civilians who came to watch combat without any sense of danger - and shocking phenomenon. Then, in a few days, the Netherlands were overrun by Nazi Germany. From one day to the next, the Queen and the Government were abroad and our country was occupied territory. On a personal level however, the experiences differed widely, both among military personnel and among civilians.*

There were soldiers, like those who fought on the Grebbeberg, who had fought for days. For other soldiers, for example the crews of pillboxes along the Maas and IJssel-rivers, the war had lasted only a few hours or less. And others had seen little or no enemy at all. For example, the army corps that occupied the northern part of the Grebbe-Line had not been in combat except for some skirmishes. Citizens also had very different experiences. One had only seen some Luftwaffe aircraft flying over and a German military column passing in the distance, the other had been confronted with fierce street fighting in their own residential area or had even undergone heavy aerial bombardments. What all, military and civilian alike, had in common was the remarkable transience of the event. Suddenly there was war, thousands were killed and great damage was done, and just as suddenly it was over and life seemed to be partly returning to normal."

Later it became clear that the significance of the short war in May 1940 was first of all that The Netherlands decided to fully engage in battle with the German invaders, in contrast to Denmark, which had limited itself to more or less symbolic resistance. A few days later, the decision to fight was followed by a second, equally crucial decision: there would be no capitulation of the government. The Queen and the ministers went to England to continue the battle from there. The surrender of the 'Fortress Holland' therefore did not mean the surrender of The Netherlands. Commander-in-Chief Winkelman emphasized this once again to the German General Von Küchler. Like thousands others, Erik also had that attitude: *"this fight goes on until my country is free again"*, which would become clear later.

The Belgian King Leopold did not deviate but stayed in his own country – "with his army", (as he put it), and would become a prisoner of war. In France, the Vichy regime reached an agreement with the Germans in June.

The decision to continue the struggle marked not only the Netherlands' international position⁷. It also made it possible for Queen Wilhelmina to become a national symbol of the resistance against Nazi Germany in the occupied Netherlands.

Strictly militarily, the Netherlands had little to offer to the Allies with its choice to continue fighting. In Europe that was really only the navy, which had largely escaped to England. But the Netherlands was also a colonial power. Until the conquest by the Japanese, Indonesia was an important supplier of oil and all kinds of raw materials. In Suriname, bauxite was extracted, a raw material that was necessary for aircraft production. Also there was a large refinery on Curaçao. Netherlands was also a seafaring nation with a large merchant fleet. All ships and seamen were obliged by the government to sail for the Allied cause. With the choice on 10 May 1940 to go into battle and to prevent a government capitulation with the subsequent decision, a significant act was committed not only in principle, but also in a very practical sense.

⁷ Apart from Holland, all surrounding countries surrendered to the Germans in 1940, Erik said once with a certain amount of pride. Although it was of no particular significance, Dutch veterans were justifiably proud on this.

The war in Holland ended after the bombing of Rotterdam on Wednesday morning May 15, 1940. At eight o'clock in the morning, the Dutch general Winkelman appeared at the 'Maasbridge' in Rotterdam. The Germans took him and his officers to a primary school in Rijsoord, where the capitulation would be signed. The German general von K  chler gave a short speech, in which the Dutch troops were complimented. Winkelman thanked him for the compliment, but otherwise kept his mouth shut until K  chler presented Winkelman with the capitulation conditions. Then something unexpected happened. Winkelman refused. The Dutch Commander-in-Chief did not want to agree to the surrender. *"No", he said, "that is not possible, because we cannot make peace. We will continue the war!"*. The German officers tried to persuade the Dutch, but eventually saw that it was pointless, as Winkelman had nothing to say outside the Netherlands. But the dismay of the Germans grew even greater. The few Dutch pilots who had fled and the Dutch soldiers in the province of Zeeland could be dealt with, but where were the Dutch navy and the merchant fleet? The Dutch Rear Admiral Heeris now took the floor and told the German naval attach   present that, only a few hours ago, he had sent a message to all units, calling on as many personnel and equipment as possible to be sent to England.

Various naval ships and 2000 personnel had then set sail for England. The Germans reacted annoyed, especially when Heeris continued his story and announced that all Dutch merchant ships had already received a telegram in the early morning of May 10 with the order not to return to the Netherlands. In total, a combined tonnage of 2,500,000 had been missed or sailed away and only ten percent of the merchant fleet⁸ fell into German hands. After two hours of negotiations, the Dutch and German officers sat opposite each other. It was dead quiet. The capitulation protocol was on the table. At ten o'clock General Winkelman put his signature. All over the world, the Dutch fought on, but in Holland itself, the German occupation had begun.

The decision to fight the German invaders had a tragic side. After all, soldiers and civilians had assumed that the defense could be maintained for a longer period of time and that the Netherlands alone did not stand a chance in advance. They counted on considerable help from France and Great Britain, powerful countries that could be assumed to be able to resist Germany. None of this came true. Without a chance, Holland was defeated in a few days. Large-scale allied aid was not forthcoming, partly because the French army and the British forces in France soon found themselves in great difficulty. The bellicose Nazi Germany showed itself militarily superior in May 1940. It was not until much later in the Second World War that their crimes became known and the chances would turn. Erik would play his part in it.

⁸ Mostly smaller vessels

After the war, Erik wrote: *"During the battle, I was already convinced that the Dutch high command unwittingly contributed to the general nervousness with its communication policy. Some of the messages issued undoubtedly had a favorable and encouraging effect, for example if they related to the large number of German planes shot down or the failure of the strategic raid; people were excited about that. But other announcements were made that aroused concern, although the contrary was intended"*.

In order to prevent treasonous activities, many thousands of persons considered dangerous to the state had been arrested: Germans living in the Netherlands, Dutch Hitler sympathizers but also revolutionary left-wing figures. All this had been prepared during the mobilization period, while a few prominent figures had already been interned well before the German invasion. However, especially in The Hague, many more people were arrested than were on the arrest lists. Not only were the national leaders and local key figures of the NSB arrested, but many ordinary members, whether or not family members, were taken from their homes. It was later established that only a small number of NSB-members actually played a role in the fifth column. Erik saw a lot of them being arrested and, as lots of other Dutch citizens, felt good about it. *"At least something was done to make the situation less threatening"*, he said.

The battle for The Hague claimed relatively many casualties. Nearly five hundred Dutchmen were killed, and probably as many German soldiers. There were also many injured in hospitals. On the German side, there was also a lot of material damage. A large number of transport aircraft had been lost. During the actions in the 'Fortress Holland', but especially around The Hague, at least 160 aircraft were completely destroyed or damaged to such an extent that they had to be considered lost.



Ockenburg end of May 1940: the remains of a destroyed Junkers-52
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1940)

Genealogie Moolenaar

That was a large part of the more than four hundred Junkers JU-52 aircraft that were available at the start of the attack. In total, the German Air Force lost between 328 and 375 aircraft during the battle of the Netherlands, including fighters and bombers. A single valuation even exceeds five hundred. There has been a lot of speculation about the effect of the German losses of people and equipment near The Hague. The plans for the invasion of England, which also included airborne operations, undoubtedly have been hampered by this. It is certain that a large part of the German fleet of transport aircraft was eliminated in the battle for the Netherlands.



Erik's 'selfie' in the cockpit of a downed BF109 (Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1940)

A few days after the battle Erik and his friends went to 'take a look' (as he himself said) on the familiar grounds of Ockenburg airport, where a cruel battle was fought. It was quiet now and Erik secretly managed to shoot three photos of the havoc. With youthful hubris, he even

managed to take a 'selfie', sitting in the cockpit of a downed Messerschmidt BF109. Not without danger: the German sentries discovered the boys and chased them off the site. Fortunately they were not 'trigger happy', which would change later in the war....



This Dutch Douglas 8A-3N fighter-bomber on Ockenburgh never saw action: she wasn't ready for war....

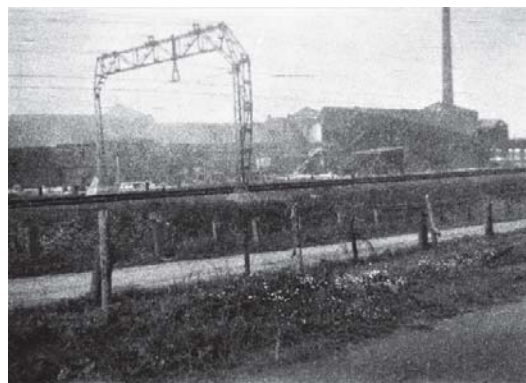
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1940)

Genealogie Moolenaar

A few weeks later, Erik and his friend went to Rotterdam. At first, they had no business there, but they felt that it was their duty to go there and pay their respects to all those dead and to the people who lost everything. Once they got there the shock was so great that they stayed there for several days as members of the cleanup teams. It was there that Erik got his first real share of the horrors of war. He took the following pictures.



Rotterdam, June 1940 From left to right: Remains of the 'Laurenschuur', one of the old harbours, burning remains of the ss. Statendam (secretly taken because photographing was prohibited) and an unknown factory in the citycenter.
(Original fotos Erik Moolenaar, June 1940)



After the Dutch army capitulated on May 14, most inhabitants returned to their homes and the NSB-members were released en masse. Most of them would later collaborate with the Nazi's.

To the great disappointment of the members, the 'Vereniging de Haagsche Burgerwacht' was dissolved at the beginning of July 1940 by order of the German authorities and was never founded again. Erik also had to hand in his uniform and his weapon⁹.

Handing in was very simple: all uniform items¹⁰ had to be neatly stacked by the users in a central place and the rifles had to be put down there also.

Except for a few guards, there was no check on the condition or completeness of the items. This soon became known, after which the number and the quality of the items returned dramatically decreased. Erik also participated in these 'sabotage actions'; he once said: *"My uniform was no longer buttoned, my rifle would never fire again... and my bayonet? I still have it..."*¹¹

Also the Boy Scout organization was banned, but until 1943 Erik and his friends succeeded in continuing their activities secretly. They renamed themselves a 'walking club' and held their meetings in the countryside. Erik, with a mischievous smile: *"very soon already, we found ourselves conducting small acts of resistance: twisting signposts, making 'Spanish Riders'¹², puncturing tyres of German cars with our Scout daggers and delivering messages. All very carefully of course!"*

After we, as Erik's older children, had read 'the battle for the residence' (author: E.H. Brongers), our father Erik told us a bit more about this period. He said: *"We hardly noticed the occupation during the rest of 1940, apart from one thing: the Dutch broadcasting organizations were taken over by the Germans and could not be trusted anymore. From mid-1940 we followed all the news via 'radio Oranje', broadcasting from London"*.

At first, daily life was rather normal, but that changed in 1941. He said: *"Gradually there were more and more restrictions and a general atmosphere of fear took over. At first the restrictions were lenient, such as the ban on radio's and Jews entering parks, but the policy of measure after measure closed like a fishing net around the society, so that over time our lives became more and more difficult. Especially Jews had great difficulties. They were no longer allowed to employ non-Jews, they had to wear a yellow Star of David, had to hand over money, securities, art and jewelry to the authorities; cars and bicycles also had to be surrendered; a curfew was imposed, coffeehouses, hotels and restaurants were off limits for Jews; swimming pools were banned and later on we were only allowed to go shopping for a few hours a day. And so it went on and on"*.

Especially in The Hague people were living more and more in fear. During the occupation, the 'Binnenhof' and the 'Plein' became the center of the German administration in The Netherlands. 'Plein 23' was the headquarters of the German Reichscommissioner, Dr. Arthur Seyss Inquart. The commander of the German armed forces and the entire police top also occupied buildings on the 'Plein'.

⁹ That was of no use after all, because he had never received ammo for it...

¹⁰ Washed and ironed!

¹¹ And now I have it...

¹² Small iron stars that were sprinkled over the road to give the Germans blowout tires.

Society 'De Witte' was given a destination as 'Kasino des Reichskommissars', a society for officers and high-ranking officials. All other important German authorities had settled in the immediate vicinity, on and around the 'Binnenhof'.

The red and black swastika flag fluttered on all the facades. The 'Sicherheitspolizei' and Sicherheitsdienst (GeStaPo), located at the 'Binnenhof', were involved in 'Jewish affairs'. The large Dutch cities were teeming with NSB-members who held Hitler in high esteem. Hiding in a big city should be easy, but as time went on, betrayal lurked everywhere. Many were betrayed, arrested, deported to Germany and put to work or worse, eliminated.

In those years, Erik worked as an analyst at a paint factory in The Hague. Working during the day, studying at night, that's what the first years of the war looked like for Erik. His father was a house painter and the family, like many others, struggled to keep their heads above water. The factory had been taken over by the Germans and was only allowed to produce for the army, which Erik and his colleagues looked at with dismay. Day to day life continued, but for many young boys who avoided the actual battle of 1940 because of their age, a great danger loomed.

In the autumn of 1940, German companies started actively recruiting workers in the Netherlands, but despite the measures taken against the unemployed, the number of applications fell short of the expectations the Germans had.

As more and more German men got drafted into the army, Germany desperately needed more workers in the war industry.

So, in May 1943 the 'general Arbeitseinsatz' was proclaimed in the occupied Netherlands, after occasionally earlier groups of people had been summoned for a labor inspection. In May 1943 all young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five were called upon to report for the Labor Deployment. The results for the Nazis were meager. Many Dutch men went into hiding or tried to arrange an exemption through a medical examiner or politically influential person.

The compulsory general labor deployment from May 1943 initially yielded only limited results for the German occupier. It was expected that 170,000 people would be recruited to work in Germany, but this became less than a third of the intended number: 'only' 54,000 workers, instead of the expected 170,000. The Germans then decided to widen the age category to seventeen to forty years. There were also raids in which people were arrested who were then put to work in Germany. For example, during a raid in Rotterdam on November 10, 1944, no fewer than 50,000 (!) Rotterdam-men were arrested and, after they had been gathered in soccer-stadium 'De Kuip', were transported to factories in Germany.

In total, the Nazis managed to arrange no more than a third of the approximately one and a half million Dutch people who should have gone to Germany for forced labour.

As an extra burden for the inhabitants of The Hague, the construction of the Atlantikwall, a tank ditch through large parts of The Hague and Scheveningen, started as part of the 'Fortress Scheveningen'. Part of The Hague was demolished, which had far-reaching consequences. In addition to the many bunkers, fortifications and barricades along the coast of Scheveningen, the Germans had an anti-tank ditch dug and meters high concrete tank walls built. The line ran from 'Kijkduin', via 'het Haagse Bos' towards the coast.

Massive destruction followed. More than 30.000 homes were evacuated, thousands of homes were demolished and 50.000 trees were felled. At least 140.000 residents of The Hague, including almost all residents of Scheveningen, had to leave their homes by order of the German occupier.

That was about a quarter of the population. People who were economically tied to The Hague were allowed to stay in the city, the rest were evacuated outside the city. For example, many Scheveningers ended up in eastern and northern parts of the country. The wide bare strip that was created by the construction of the Atlantic Wall was declared a prohibited area.



1943: the tank-wall zone in The Hague

Erik's family was lucky. Their house was situated about 700 meters east of the demolition zone and survived....¹³

¹³ A little modernized, but in 2021 it is still there....

‘Arbeitseinsatz’

Millions of people, from all occupied territories in Europe, were employed in the German armament industry. German-friendly officials from the occupied territories and the German state apparatus were brought in to, as far as possible, keep the unrest within bounds and to give the occupying forces a semblance of legality. The eventual repulsion of the German armies (Erik and his future companions danced through the streets when they heard of the demise of the German troops at Stalingrad in January 1943) gave the population of the occupied territories courage and confidence and made many more recalcitrant than ever. But the Germans hit back hard and looked for ever different means to get hold of new workers. Pressure, intimidation and brute force were used, more frequently and more systematically as the Allied bombing intensified. Warfare determined the hunt for workers, but also the resistance of the hunted. That is why the history of the Arbeitseinsatz is a textbook example of the history of coercion on people and of people's struggle against coercion.

At the end of the Second World War, well over seven and a half million foreign workers and prisoners of war had been put to work in Germany, and in the occupied territories again millions and millions of men and women were forced to work for the interests of the German rulers. But the greater reserves of raw materials and labor of the Allies, together with the intransigence of Churchill and the unwillingness, passive resistance and open opposition of so many people in the occupied territories ultimately determined the fate of the German ‘Reich’.

1943: Forced to Germany, whether you wanted to or not

As said, the German occupiers forced the Dutch young men to work in the German war industry. With the help of the factory's management (which was already forced to convert its civilian production into the sole production of war paints for the German occupier), Erik had the chance to stay out of that forced labour for a long time but, like many young Dutch men, he too had to leave.

Erik wrote:

“In the beginning, the Germans and their Dutch ‘helpers’ were still somewhat tolerant. For example, you could sometimes obtain a postponement of the obligation to work in Germany if you could prove that you were studying and you had already registered for the exam. Resourceful people soon discovered that when the exam terms offered possibilities to request a postponement of the date on which you should take the exam, you could avoid posting to Germany for half to a full year by registering for the next exam. So lots of people requested a postponement of the exam date at the same time they registered for the exam”.

“In my case, I tried this trick, but it didn't help anymore: they had already figured it out. Also (like I did) taking the exam and making sure that you got an unsatisfactory mark for one subject (you were then rejected but you were allowed to take the next exam) offered no further opportunity to escape the slavers. Much later, the so-called ‘hiding’ offered good opportunities but by then we had already left.”

Erik again:

"Well, finally there it was; employment in Germany. At first the Germans had tried to get workers away from the Dutch companies (they were mainly in need of professionals ('Facharbeiter')), but the management and company leaders had a whole arsenal of excuses ready: "when they (the Germans) would take that and that man away, well, then they would no longer be able to produce such and such. This always happened to be one of the products that that company (by the way, also forced) supplied to the Germans".

"So, also 'by coincidence', I was the only laboratory technician at the 'van den Doel en Fray' paint factory in The Hague who could read and speak the German language well enough. The managing director, Mr Fray, insisted: "If you take Moolenaar away from me, I will have no one left to translate all your instructions for me and to see to it that your camouflage paints (which the factory was obliged to supply) is ground and mixed exactly as prescribed".

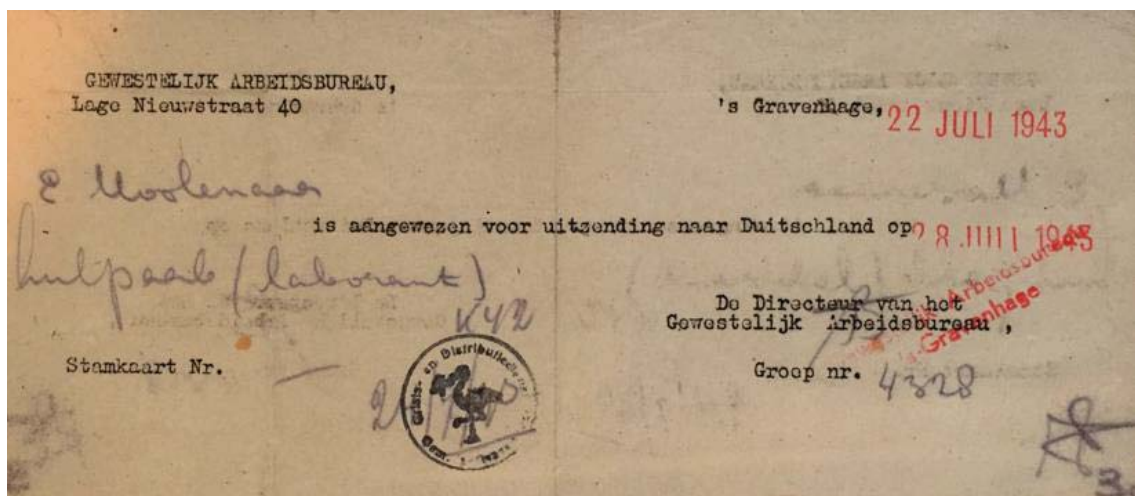
Gewestelijk Arbeidsbureau		Opdracht Nr.	452B
Den Haag		20 Juli	1943.
DEN HEER			
HERRN			
Naam	Moolenaar	Voornam	Erik
Name		Vorname	
Geboortedatum	6.8.22.	beroep	Ass. Laborant
Geburtsdatum		beruf	
Laatst werkzaam als	Ass. Laborant		
Zuletzt beschäftigt als			
Woonplaats	den Haag	Straat	Kamperfoeliestr. Nr. 105
Wohnort		Straße	
Gewestelijk Arbeidsbureau voor de woonplaats	den Haag		
Bezirksarbeitsamt des Wohnortes			
Gehuwd, ongehuwd	ledig		
Familienstand			
Aantal der in gemeenschappelijke huishouding levende minderjarige kinderen			
Zahl der im gemeinsamen Haushalt lebenden minderjährigen Kinder			
Landesarbeitsamt	Baden	Station	Strassburg.
Aufnahme L.A.A.		Bahnstation	
AANWIJZING TOT HET VERRICHTEN VAN DIENSTEN.		VERPFLICHTUNGSBESCHIED.	
Op grond van de Verordeningen van den Rijkscommissaris van het bezette Nederland... 26 Juli 1943		Auf Grund der Verordnungen des Reichskommissars für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete Nr. 262 vom 22. Juli 1943... 26 Juli 1943	
voor een beperkten tijd tot het verrichten van diensten in Deutschland verplicht. De arbeidsvoorwaarden zullen u worden bekend gemaakt door het Arbeitsamt in Deutschland, in welks gebied u zult worden geplaatst.		begrenzte Zeit zur Dienstleistung für einen Arbeitsplatz in Deutschland verpflichtet. Die Arbeitsbedingungen gibt Ihnen das für die Arbeitsstelle zuständige deutsche Arbeitsamt bekannt. Es gelten die gleichen Arbeitsbedingungen wie für deutsche Arbeiter.	
Dezelfde arbeidsvoorwaarden (Tarifordnung) zijn gelijk als voor de Deutsche arbeiders gelden. Niet nakoming van deze aanwijzing wordt overeenkomstig artikel 4 der Verordening Nr. 42/4 gestraft.		Die Nichtbefolgung dieses Dienstverpflichtungsbescheides wird gemäß § 4 der Verordnung Nr. 42/4 bestraft.	
Geneeskundig onderzocht op	22-7-43	Handtekening van den onderzoekingsarts Unterschrift des Arztes	
Ärztlich untersucht am			
Geschied voor Deutschland	In plaats		
Tauglich für das Reich			
Geschied voor Nederland			
Tauglich für die Niederlande		Bemerkungen	
Ongeschied			
Untauglich			
Het paspoort dient nog bij het Deutsche pas.pur. ter plaatse te worden aangevraagd. Der Pass ist noch bei der in Deutschland zuständigen Passstelle zu beantragen.			
De Directeur van het GAB		De Deutsche Fachberater	
Der Direktor des Bezirksarbeitsamtes		Der deutsche Fachberater	

Erik's order to register for the arbeitseinsatz (original document)

He continues: "But now the Germans had an increasing need for 'Hilfsarbeiter', which no longer meant that such a person could be deployed anywhere and anytime. And so in the end everyone who was not a 'Facharbeiter' was 'de sigaar'¹⁴ and the Germans summoned whole age groups. They selected the professionals from them and the remaining ones were automatically the coolies. With my call for employment, I instinctively felt that the existing order, the world I knew, was collapsing and soon would cease to exist.

The period that would radically change my life began".

"First the 'medical' examination, because the Germans were very afraid of infectious diseases. It went something like this: On one side of the table a man in a white coat with hands like a coalminer and opposite him myself: tanned (it was July) and in the prime of my life. The man observed me and concluded without any further questioning or examination: "Healthy young man, normal build, no breathing difficulties, no visible defects". And that was it: approved. Six minutes later I was back on the street again: 'tauglich für das Reich'¹⁵. On the document, there also was a possible decision "tauglich für die Niederlande. No statement had been made about whether I was suitable for the Netherlands. The 'medical examiner' didn't bother at all to fill this in....



Fit for Germany. Original document July 1943.

Erik: "We, several hundred boys from The Hague, were assigned to leave on July 28, 1943 and we couldn't do anything about it, not even protest. The option to go into hiding was still in its infancy and hardly anyone dared to risk reprisals against their families. So we went, but not before we were completely robbed by the occupying forces: we had to hand in our food and clothing vouchers! We could no longer buy food for ourselves from 23 to 28 July (5 days!) and that at a time when the belt had already been tightened several times. Let's roughly calculate: 200 boys x 5 days x two meals a day = 2000 meals that no longer served the Dutch population. Where did the food go?????????"

¹⁴ A Dutch expression: Being 'de sigaar' means , being screwed.

¹⁵ Fit for service in Germany.

"We were also robbed in another way: we would be paid for our work in Germany according to the same standards as the German factory worker. But as it turned out: before departure we were obliged to sign a statement that we agreed to a net wage payment of 40% to ourselves on the location where we would be working and that 60% would be transferred to the regional employment office in The Hague, for later payment. There was no mention of who, how and when that G.A.B. would pay out the money. Guess what??? We never received the money.....¹⁶

And the 40% that we ourselves would receive? Well, we did get paid, but 'minus so much for food, minus so much for lodging, minus so much for this and that and finally MINUS SO MUCH FOR FINES (that were not even given yet.....)'"

Schiltigheim

In his memoirs, Erik wrote: *"When the train started to move and left the station of The Hague with us - a few hundred Dutch boys who were forced by the occupiers of our country to do slave labour in Germany – on board, there was still a very optimistic mood: it could not be so bad as they said, could it? A few may still have envisioned the tearful faces of those left behind, but nearly all of us had the sense of the 'adventure' that had just begun. Adventures change your life and this one was certainly going to change mine because most of the boys, including myself, were very young and had never been outside the Netherlands. 'Ah, you're young and you want something' don't you? But as the hours passed and it was discovered that the architectural style of the houses was quite different from that in our own country and that the names were in German (Gothic)¹⁷ inscriptions, the elation turned into a feeling of dread, especially when we saw the first bombed cities: what will happen? What awaits us now?"*



Erik's German identity card (original document)

¹⁶ The Dutch Government, from which Erik later tried to collect the money, turned out to be an equally great deceiver. They said that he had to go to the German Government to collect it. Finally he claimed the money (plus interest...) from the German Embassy, only to be told that his claim was barred...

¹⁷ At first, the Nazis liked the Gothic characters. In 1941 however, they discovered that the letters were designed by Jews, and a ban followed on the Gothic script: the 'Teksterlass'. However, in the Netherlands they continued using these characters thus the government documents had the rare distinction of being set in a letter banned by the Nazis themselves.... No greater honor can be bestowed upon a character.

Genealogie Moolenaar

"After 17 hours of travel, the train arrived in the just bombed city of Mannheim and we all had to get off, except the 'craftsmen' seated in the front (welders etc.), who were going to go to Strasbourg. Me and a few other boys decided that Strasbourg would be a far safer place than our destination 'somewhere in the Ruhr-area' and in the chaos on the platform, we managed to reach that part of the train that would indeed take us to Strasbourg".

"After arriving at the factory at Schiltigheim in Alsace, people there at first did not know what to do with us newly arrived boys, who were obvious no metal workers. Later we heard that the factory management feared difficulties if we were to be returned, and so we were placed as 'Hilfsarbeiter'¹⁸ among the fitters: supplying and removing materials, clearing blockages on the conveyor belts, etc."

"A beautiful job to draw the line and to commit (again carefully!) some sabotage, especially at night during the night shifts that alternated every other week". This sabotage was not so difficult: during the cleaning of certain machines, the settings could simply be changed slightly. As a result the dimensions of grenades and all kinds of other parts were no longer correct.



Schiltigheim, 1944 (original foto Erik Moolenaar)

Arbeitskarte — **Befreiungsschein*** (Handwritten: 204091 2862)

Gültig bis auf weiteres. Widerruf vorbehalten

Familienname: MOOLENAAR

Vor(Ruf-)name: Erik

Geburtsname bei Frauen: _____

Geboren am 6.8.1922 in Den Haag

männlich, ~~verheiratet~~ ledig, ~~verheiratet~~

Staatsangehörigkeit: Niederlande

Volkszugehörigkeit: Niederländer

Herkunftsland (eingereist aus): Niederlande

Heimatort: Den Haag

Kreis: Den Haag

Wohnhaft: _____

(bei Ausstellg. d. Befr.Sch.) Beschäftigt als: Hilfsarbeiter 23A5

Arbeitsbuch-Nr.: A 393/003513

Arbeitsstelle: Els. Eisen- & Stahlwerk GmbH.
Straßburg-Schiltigheim

Typ-Nr.: _____ Im Inl. seit 29.7.44

Ausgestellt am 25.9. 1944

Arbeitsamt
Straßburg

*) Dem ausländischen Arbeiter/Angestellten auszuhandigen!

'Arbeitskarte' (original document)

Naturally, after some time this was discovered and the settings were corrected again. The factory-management however was so afraid for the Nazi's that they never took any action. They looked away and just let the incorrect parts pass through".

¹⁸ Handyman

"The Schiltigheim labor camp, just outside Strasbourg, consisted of several parts, mostly wooden barracks for dozens of 'Hilfsarbeiter'".

"Gemeinschaftslager H, Strassburg-Schiltigheim was for us Dutchmen. The 'Fremdarbeiterlager', the series of wooden barracks where we were housed, was wedged between the Comessa-factory and the Marne-Rhine canal with its many locks. These, we thought, could well be the target of an air raid, but fortunately that was never the case. Many years later I read that the Allies spared the city of Strasbourg as much as possible. Although Alsace had been re-incorporated by Germany in 1940, it was still regarded as French territory that, like so many other countries and regions, was awaiting liberation from the German yoke".

"Besides the Dutch, part of the camp was also populated by Russian, Ukrainian and Polish women and girls, all dragged away from their homeland to work here in the arms factories. They did the same heavy work as we did and the barracks in which they lived were infested with bedbugs (they were also in our barracks, but by working together we could usually keep the misery under control). During the work and in the camp we could occasionally share some food with them that we had received from local Alsatians, and the Russians did some mending for us in return".



Receiving food from friendly Alsatians (Original picture by Erik Moolenaar, 1944)

"Another part of the camp, as far as I remember, was for Russian prisoners of war. These parts of the camp were separated from each other (and from us) by a fence and barbed wire. We were generally treated fairly (we had 'food vouchers'!) and from time to time had the freedom to leave the camp. In this way we were able to make some contact with the locals who occasionally, within their means (it was getting more and more difficult for them too as the war progressed), gave us some help.

So, sometimes we were surprised by stew, ryebread and beer. We took it with us to the camp and shared it with as many companions as possible”.

“The living conditions in the other parts of the camp were very bad, so we tried to help them. This had to be done carefully, because interaction with the 'Untermenschen' was punishable by severe penalties”.

“For us that almost certainly meant a transfer to 'Schirmeck'¹⁹, for the Russians or the women an almost certain death. That didn't stop us from helping them as much as possible. Especially towards the end of the war, when it was clear to almost everyone that Germany was losing the war, we were more and more free to help them”.

“Every day in the camp and the Comessa-factory was more or less the same. The day began with a roll-call, with all of us being counted and assigned to work. We worked in shifts of 12 hours, the day shift from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening and the night shift from 6 in the evening to 6 in the morning.

Work was mainly done in the factory, but in summer 1944 we also had to help local farmers with their crops and later we were assigned to dig trenches and build defense positions. Breakfast in the morning consisted of 'coffee', some slices of 'bread' and some cheese or sausage.

In the afternoon there was soup and in the evening a warm meal, made from whatever was available. For the rest of our food and 'cigarettes', we used our food vouchers”.

Erik writes over those first days they experienced this strict food regime:

“The Dutch are used to complaining, which they could always do with impunity in our own country due to the freedom of expression enshrined in our Constitution. But then you suddenly find yourself faced with a case where, in all your innocence, you think you can make a comment because the law is clearly on your side; furthermore, that comment was only intended as a request for an explanation”.

“It was all about the food vouchers that were handed out to us after we had put our things in the wooden barracks that would be our 'home' for God knows how long. Because there was a lot of stealing and food vouchers were important for our survival, most of us did put all that sort of things in our jacket or trouser pockets, but a few had quickly noticed that there were only monthly vouchers for 30 days (and not for 31 if a month had 31 days). If there was anything that could have caused a Dutchman to make sharp remarks; yes, it was this case”.

“When we demanded an explanation about the missing day, the complete German hell broke loose! What we got over our heads in blaring and screaming German meant, that we hadn't done a thing yet and that we first had to show what we were worth. And moreover: we came from the immensely rich Holland, where they got more to eat than everyone here in Germany. When it wasn't one or two of us, but everyone who started talking big, the German guards got up and from then on, not one hell, but all possible German hells appeared to have broken loose. We then learned the word "Schirmeck" and only seconds later we did understand that that was the nearest 'Arbeitslager' (concentration camp).

¹⁹ Schirmeck-Vorbrück concentration camp: one of the subcamps of the infamous concentrationcamp Natzweiler-Struthof

After one or two such small incidents we had learned once and for all what the password was. The rumors about the camp, which was less than 40 kilometers away, were terrible; no one wanted to end up there! Then just 'shut up', even when justice was 100% sure, absolutely and undeniably on our side".

"To make sure we didn't forget to shut up, we hung up the poster 'Feind hört mit'²⁰ in our barracks; devoid of any sense of humour, even the 'Lagerführer' had some words of approval...."



Erik in camp Schiltigheim 1944. Directly behind him (with hat) his friend Jan van Gemert.
(Original picture by Erik Moolenaar, 1944)

Like the rest, Erik had come to terms with himself that the world he knew was turned upside down. He knew that he was one of the numerous boys, men and women that were dragged out of their countries by the Germans to make ammunition and other weapons of war somewhere in Germany and were at high risk of being killed.

He said: *"I too was one of those hundreds of thousands who only had one wish: away from where we were sitting and return to our homes. But I also knew that that would not be possible until after the Allied armies had defeated the Germans, liberated all occupied territories and Germany itself had been brought under Allied military rule. Every single day I asked myself: what can I do??".*

He told me: *"Daily life was a form of gauntlet running, of being seeing blind and hearing deaf, because even in 1944 there was still something like the Gestapo and fanatical Nazi guards. An open 'Deutschfeindliche'²¹ attitude was extremely dangerous: most middle-aged and older "Volkssturm"-men who had survived World War One might be decent, but the few hardcore-Nazi's that were still there ruled with an iron fist until the very end".*

²⁰ The enemy is listening too

²¹ German-unfriendly

After the successful invasion of the Allied armies in June 1944, things got tense, because Alsatians also worked in the factory. Before the war, Alsace was French territory, but in 1940 it had again become German territory and the population had been made 'Reich Germans'. Most of the population, however, had remained French at heart, and they enjoyed it when the few Dutchmen who had learned French at school spoke to them in that language (which, incidentally, was strictly forbidden by the German factory management).



Occasional freedom near one of the locks in the Marne-Rijnkanaal.
Strasbourg Cathedral in the background. Standing on the left: Erik.
In front of him, sitting: Jan van Gemert.
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, 1944)

From them Erik and his friend Jan van Gemert received tips on how to get out of the factory and where to hide to wait for the arrival of the allied units, which they managed to do in November 1944. Sometimes the boys were taken out of the factory to clear debris or to do other things.

Early in October 1944, Erik and his comrades had to dig trenches about 25 kilometers west of Strasbourg. They were given no food or shelter; they had to organize that with the local farmers themselves.

Incidentally, this gave Erik the opportunity to arrange things with local farmers and study the environment in case he ever was able to escape.

In the meantime, in the streets he saw more and more refugees, sick and confused, mostly from the eastern parts of the 'Reich'. The camp was 'replenished' almost daily with new forced labourers, including women from Poland and the Soviet Union.

From May 1944, Strasbourg was also bombed. The French General de Gaulle was able to stop this for a long time because he wanted to spare the beautiful ancient city, but now that his troops were approaching the city and German resistance was increasing, he decided not to spare the Germans there any longer.

For Erik and his comrades, a time of increasing tension began: unearthly howling of air-raid sirens, usually at night, often false alarms. Bomb shelters with a single bare light bulb and sometimes complete darkness: *"I gained a glimpse of the kind of hell into which man falls all too easily: the disappearance of every feeling, every compassion in the face of death"*, Erik said.

He told me: *"Later I would remember those nights when the city's sirens seemed to go off at the slightest sound. The increasingly scanty evening rations: watery soup with a few strings of sinewy horse meat and bread that you could hardly swallow because sometimes sawdust seemed to be incorporated in it (which was, in fact, the case...). Food vouchers that were handed out but for which you could no longer buy anything because there was simply nothing left for sale. Wanting to, but not being able to escape because those left behind would be severely punished"*.

He writes: *"Eventually there comes a time when you will find yourself in a situation where you have to choose for yourself"*. And so it happened: he finally would be able to do something.

From his memoirs:

"We can't keep going on like this. The difficulty, however, is that I first have to tell extensively about "Germans and their booklet", about "air-raid shelters", about "rebar", about "fighter planes" and "air fleets"... Hey, there you have something like this: air fleets. I realize that I am writing in the year 2001 about concepts that existed more than half a century ago, but about which the imagination had already begun to abandon us 10-15 years later. Ever seen a 1000 planes at once, way above us, flying in tight closed formations: blocks of about 40 aircraft? Even from the ground we could see that each block was composed in such a way that it could defend itself in all directions against fighter planes trying to break through such a formation. Each block was thus like a fortress of olden times. Well before we heard of their nickname, we already called them 'flying fortresses'".²²

"It will be clear that long-range missiles did not exist in the years in which this took place; parties that were at war with each other still had to deliver their destructive loads to the opposing party themselves".

"Those large numbers of planes targeting the German industrial towns came from many airfields in England; from there the formations flew along different routes usually to some assembly point and then jointly set course for the target which would then be 'nicely' beaten up. Strasbourg was often such an assembly point, and air-raid alarms were given each time when the formations pointed in our direction."

²² Erik didn't know then, that there were also hundreds of Liberators and Lancasters taking part in those raids.

We, Dutch people, never felt so happy²³: after all, we worked in a munitions factory that could well become the target of an air raid; luckily that never happened extensively”.

About the air-raids he wrote:

“As soon as the aircraft had left the airspace above us, the air-raid alarm was called off and everyone could come out of the shelters and resume work (or sleep), but as the planes increased in numbers, it happened more and more that the first aircraft had already started flying homeward again, while others were still approaching.

Thus it could happen that the duration of the alarm state became longer and longer. For those who had to spend that long in the factory's air-raid shelters it was nerve-wracking and once it became known that the air-raid shelters had been REJECTED by the Air Protection Inspectorate because they were not built EXACTLY according to regulations, the unrest started to increase, especially among the Alsations. A lot must have happened in those days between the factory management on the one hand (which was pushed from above because production figures were too low) and the Air Protection Inspectorate on the other. Who won that battle? THE BOOK!

*Because regulations are regulations and everyone has to keep to it! And what about the production figures? Well, that's going to cost someone somewhere but; **The Book Remains HOLY**.....”*

“In other words: The Germans were technically very clever in many ways, but ingenuity such as quick improvisation was not their forte. Hence, in problem situations often, far too often, the regulations were looked at: "Befehl ist Befehl" and that meant that you should never improvise because of something goes wrong, you'll be blamed for it and in Nazi-Germany that mostly meant the Russian front, a concentration camp or instant death. It is much easier to follow an order: the responsibility then always rests with someone else, and there is no need to wonder whether the assigned solution to the problem was the right one. This was not always the case, of course, but often enough to give rise to sometimes incomprehensible situations of which a person, who can quickly see ahead and is also resourceful will gratefully use”.

About his escape from the camp he writes: *“In the confusion, time takes giant steps and later I couldn't remember exactly how it went. At the moment, escaping wasn't my intention, but after a heavy bombardment on the factory, the next thing I knew was that I was outside and saw no one”.*

In the chaos of that bombing raid, Erik walked out of the factory. “How did I get away from the camp? Just through the gate”, he said. “I just ran away from the bombs; straight ahead all the time. Nobody looked at me anyway because all the guards, mostly old men, were in their bomb shelters or had already fled. And outside the city, I was just one of those hundreds of uncontrolled refugees”.

I remember him telling me once: “Where to go? West of course, but would it be safe? After I left the gate, I decided to set for the areas where we had dug trenches a few months earlier. I reached them safely, but found them completely deserted. No Germans in sight.

²³ He didn't realize then that everybody in and around the factory felt the same way

Local farmers told me that they had fled a few days earlier, that the 'Americans' were in one of the next villages and that there was no fighting. I continued my journey and walked along country roads towards the front that, luckily, I didn't see at all".

Suddenly there was this huge tank; just like that, in the middle of the road and at the same moment I was surrounded by a few American soldiers". Erik didn't remember the situation exactly, but he did tell that it was all very calm. The soldiers were very relaxed and after they found out that he spoke their language, the first thing they offered him was "a beautiful American 'Wings' cigarette"²⁴. One of the soldiers asked him a couple of questions and took him in a jeep to headquarters. Later on, Erik found out that this soldier was Douglas F. Ables.

Erik remembers this moment clearly: "While writing my memories, I got stuck. What was the name of the soldier I first met on my journey outside the factory? Doug / Douglas, yes, but what was his full name?

Recently I was looking for something in a box full of old papers and found a small military bible. And there I read "Douglas F. Ables." Then I realized that, 56 years later, I got that bible for the second time from him and that I had to continue with my story".



²⁴ For more than 20 years, this remained Erik's favourite blend. In 1964, from one moment to the next he stopped smoking.



The Marne-Rhine canal with in the background the Comessa factories. (foto: Internet)
(The soldier shown is not Erik Moolenaar)

Dawn

Looking at history, you could say that november 1944 in the Alsace was fairly quiet from a military point of view. Naturally, there was fierce fighting: the 7th army was advancing towards the Rhine river when Master Sergeant Douglas Ables (nr. 20820080) arrived with Erik at the Headquarters of the 636 Tank Destroyer battallion. Lateron, Erik was told that he had been lucky in passing the front so easily. In fact, two months later it would have been nearly impossible to pass the front unharmed as we will see later.

When he arrived at Headquarters 636 TD batallion, Erik was interrogated first. Totally understandable, because the US Army wanted to know all about people that came out of the blue into their jurisdiction. Erik told them all about himself, the languages he spoke, his time in the factory and the camp. Immediately the leading officers were interested. They didn't seem to know about such a facility in their operations area. After a short time, one of the intelligence-officers came back and asked Erik whether we was willing to guide a combat team in order to occupy the factory and liberate the camp. Now thát was something he had been waiting for. Finally he could do something useful!

Erik said: *"My first action started immediately: I was linked to my new friend Douglas, officially enlisted into the US Army²⁵ (ASN-nr. 38050951), my pictures were taken, I was given a uniform and a helmet²⁶ (no sidearm yet because there was no time to learn how to use it) and then, because I knew the area quite well, I was able to show the unit of the 36th ("Texas") division how, via back roads, to get to the ammunition factory where I had worked. It fell undamaged and without a fight into the hands of the Allies".*



First slave labourers, now armed guards of the PoW camp Schiltigheim...
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, 1944)

²⁵ Otherwise he would have been a non-combattant in uniform, which would mean a death sentence if he would have been captured...

²⁶ I still have that helmet...

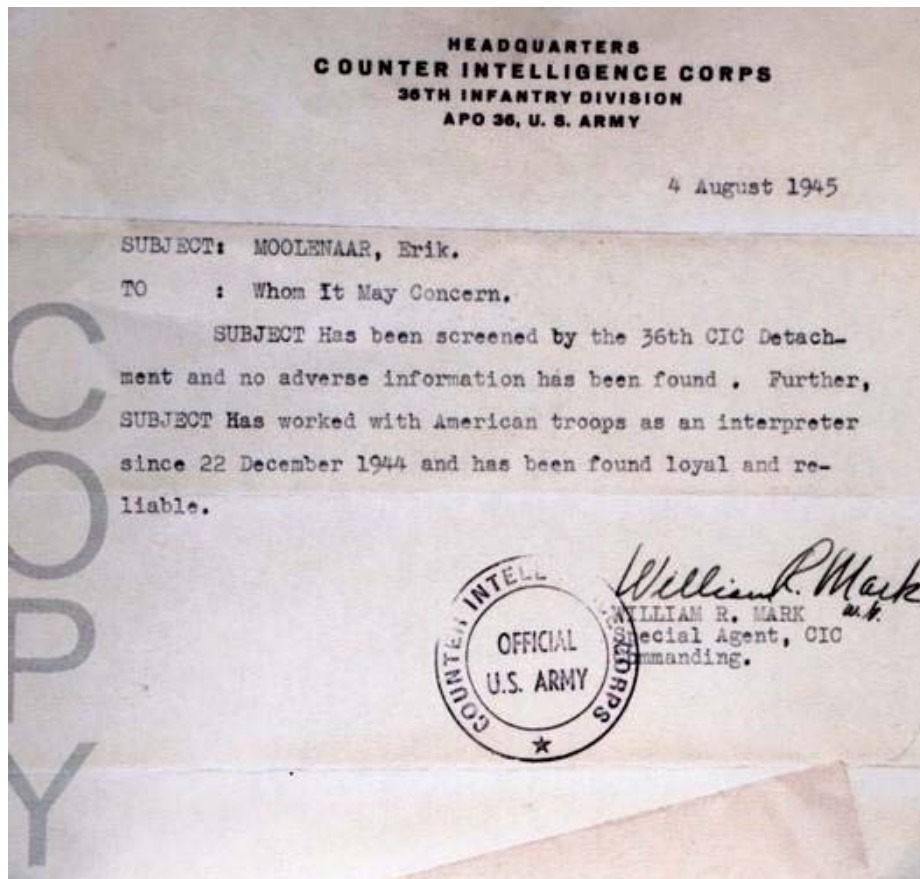
Genealogie Moolenaar

Also the camp was liberated and immediately transferred into a PoW camp. Erik assisted with the registration of the inhabitants and the next day most of them were transported to other US-facilities behind the frontline where they would receive medical treatment and would be able to get their lives back on track again²⁷.

Most of the inhabitants? Yes, because a few of Erik's comrades also enlisted in the US army and, as a start, became guards in the newly formed PoW camp.

One man joined Erik in his transformation from slave labourer into a US-soldier: his friend Jan van Gemert.

My father didn't talk much over his black period (as he called it): December 1944 until march 1945. I remember that, when I was young, I once asked him whether he had killed any Germans during the war.²⁸ He didn't answer and said *"that's adult stuff"*. Then I asked if the Germans tried to kill him. Again he remained silent, but after a short time he said *"Even if he survives, every day a soldier is on a battlefield, he dies a little. I have been there for nine months"*. I never dared to ask about this again, so some next parts of the story I had to construct from tiny fragments he mentioned during his life.



Security check (original document)

²⁷ Especially for all the Russian PoW's and the women this would be a fantastic chance to start a new life. *"I do not think that anybody did return to Russia anymore"*, Erik smiled happily...

²⁸ At that time war was no more than an interesting 'game' for me, until I myself saw the scars of war in Angola and Freetown.

I start at the moment he returned to 636 TD headquarters after the succesful capture of the Comessa factory. I think this action tasted like more²⁹ and both Erik and his friend Jan (who was also multi-lingual) expressed a desire to assist the American troops further in their fierce battle against the Germans, so close to the German border. That did not fall on deaf ears, because German and French-speaking soldiers could be put to good use and it wasn't uncommon that civillians with the right knowledge were temporarily incorporated in the Allied armies.

So, still being linked to Douglas Ables and his men, they got a few crash courses in basic military training and (of course) combat techniques. Also a severe securitycheck was conducted which, of course, they passed with flying colors.

Finally they were assigned to one of the companies of the 636 TD. I'm not sure which one, but since he remained linked to Douglas Ables, I'm guessing it was the HQ company at first. Later he joined an M10 tank destroyer team as an 'assistant driver', as far as I know in 'B' company. His commander, also as far as I can tell, was Captain Elmer J. Metzner, which I will come back to later.



One of the first PoW's Erik interrogated while in the 636 TD.
Erik seen on the back. Note the civilian clothing of the PoW!
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar, Alsace 1944)

From September 1944 on, as the Allied drive neared the French-German border in Alsace-Lorraine, German opposition became more determined. The Germans, after all, were fighting with their backs against their border and were doing everything in their power to keep the enemy out. By October, though, the fighting in the hilly, heavily forested region had settled into a war of attrition that, little by little, the Allies were winning.

As far as Erik could determine, it was fairly quiet in Alsace from mid-November to mid-December (as far as you can speak of 'peace' in a war). That was nice for him, because he didn't have time to acclimatize; after his 'courses' he immediately was thrown into battle. Patrols and fire support with the M10 were interspersed

with interpreting work at the HQ.

However, at the end of December 1944, everything changed.....

²⁹ A few months later they looked at it very differently.

"Germany is beaten", the optimists opined. "She's on her last legs", others said. "Her defeat is inevitable, and sooner rather than later". Such an outcome certainly seemed within the realm of possibility. Tens of thousands of Wehrmacht and SS-troops in France were either dead or in POW camps. Paris and Brussels had fallen to the Allies, and one city, town, and hamlet after another had been liberated.

Indeed, in the summer of 1944, Germany had suffered heavy defeats in which a significant part of the German army was destroyed. After that, however, the fronts were temporarily stabilized so that a reserve could be built up again. Also, the allied armies in the west approached the borders of Germany, making the resistance more and more fanatical: after all, the Germans were now fighting to defend their homeland! Most inhabitants of the liberated German villages however appeared to be in a happy mood: *"war is over, no more bombs, we are safe at last" ..*

Adolf Hitler on the other hand wanted to deploy his last reserves for a major counter-offensive, with which he hoped to still settle the war in his favor. Such a decision could only be made in the west, because on the eastern front, the endless open fields of the Soviet Union would easily absorb any attack. In the west, however, it seemed possible to recapture Antwerp, the only major port through which the Allies could deliver supplies.

Thus, on December 16, 1944, a massive attack was launched in the Belgian Ardennes, as the crow flies about 200 kilometers north-west of the place where Erik's unit was staying at that time. At first, little was noticed in Alsace, but as the seriousness of the situation increased, experienced troops, equipment and supplies were hastily moved from 'quiet' Alsace to the Belgian front in order to close the gaps.

Erik and his comrades didn't know it, but planned attacks towards the Siegfried Line would prove impossible for the next few months. What they did know however was that the situation north of them was precarious and everyone in Alsace was quietly happy that "they" stayed out of it, as he told me once.

Erik had seen too many examples of the German collapse and was confident that his new American friends would sort things out. Surely there couldn't be that many German soldiers left?

During the evening of 30 December, a Staff and Company Commander's conference was conducted by the Battalion Commander, at which time the Battalion Commander informed the officers that the Battalion was on a six-hour alert for movement upon orders from higher Headquarters, to a designated sector of the Seventh Army Front.

From the 636 TD battle report of Jan. 7, 1945

Well, the truth was disappointing, because there was yet another operation against the Allies to be launched: exactly in the Alsace, right on Erik's doorstep, where only four weakened³⁰ American infantry divisions, less than 45,000 in all, now faced the almost impossible task of building a mountainous frontline of more than 200 kilometers long.

³⁰ As a result of operations in November and December, the army's normal combat losses were increased by frost bite, trench foot and respiratory diseases caused by the bitter cold weather and snow.

Although snow fell lightly, giving a peaceful, Christmas-card ambiance to the hills, trees, and mountains, the Alsace front seemed quiet but, on the German side, was anything but that!

At Christmas, Erik and his friends began to sense that something was imminent: the Luftwaffe was back in large quantities and engine noise indicated that the Germans were advancing troops. The headquarters of General Drevers issued a ban on the celebration of New Year by the front troops, but for unknown reasons, hardly anyone was warned of the approaching enemy attack.

Erik, Jan and Douglas and his men did not celebrate New Year's Eve either, but Erik did receive a Christmas-present: Douglas Ables gave him his metal American army bible as a talisman. From that moment on it went where Erik went and to this day it is in the possession of Erik's grandchildren.

Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower saw the attack coming but ran out of reserves to send to Alsace; all men were active in the Ardennes.

Withdrawing was not possible for political reasons (the terribly stubborn, unreliable and unruly French General de Gaulle blocked this), so the Americans had to hold out and Erik and his comrades were going to bear the full weight of 'Operation Nordwind' (Unternehmen Nordwind): the last major German offensive of World

War II on the Western Front. It began on 31 December 1944 in Alsace and Lorraine in northeastern France, and it ended on 25 January 1945.

The goal of the offensive was to break through the lines of the U.S. Seventh Army and French 1st Army in the Upper Vosges mountains and the Alsatian Plain, and destroy them³¹, as well as the seizure of Strasbourg, which Himmler had promised would be captured by 30 January.

World War II was far from over.....



Operation Nordwind. Erik's 636 TD-unit was in the vicinity of Hagenau

³¹ "This attack has a very clear objective, namely the destruction of the enemy forces. There is not a matter of prestige involved here. It is a matter of destroying and exterminating the enemy forces wherever we find them", Hitler said.

The 'Luftwaffe' (German Air Force) committed almost 1,000 aircraft in support of the three attacking German armies. In the bitter, desperate fighting of Operation Nordwind, the VI US-Corps suffered a total of 14,716 casualties. The total number of casualties for the U.S. 7th Army as a whole remains unclear, but is estimated to amount to approximately 3,000 killed, 9,000 wounded, and 17,000 sick and injured.

In that long, grueling winter of 1944/45 on the German border, where the German army resisted with terrible vehemence, the 636 TD bataillon and the 36th (Texas) division had to put up heavy fighting against the Germans.

One of the very few times Erik spoke about this: *"Especially in and around Haguenau the battle was fierce. The infantry in particular had a hard time but, although we were more protected in our tanks, we too were hit. However, we handed out more with our harrasing fire. The first time I saw a building blown up by one of our M10s, I thought it was spectacular. Such a small grenade³² and so much destruction! When Douglas later told me that there were people in that building, I began to look at it differently and the next time it was more of a sad sight".*

Brutal winter weather and the difficulty of urban warfare gave the initial advantage to the Germans during the first weeks of 1945, but later the sheer amount of troops, equipment and supplies of the allied forces gave them the upperhand again.

Still, it took months before they secured the city of Haguenau, were able to cross the Siegfriedline near Wissembourg and later on the Rhine-river near Worms just north of Mannheim on Eastersunday april 1.

During the first three months of 1945, fear of death became a familiar face for Erik, as did relief when, at the evening of every day, he and his friends survived combat again. Erik and Jan were extensively engaged in heavy combat while serving on M10 tank destroyers.

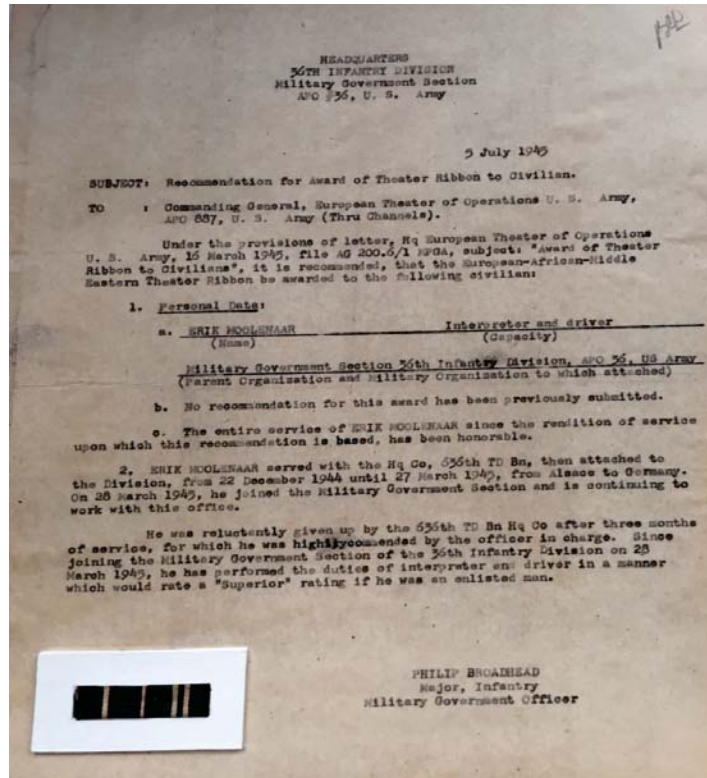


Allied M10 tank destroyers rumble through the war-ravaged streets of a village, northeast of Strasbourg. This is what Erik experienced in winter 1944/45. (foto: Internet)

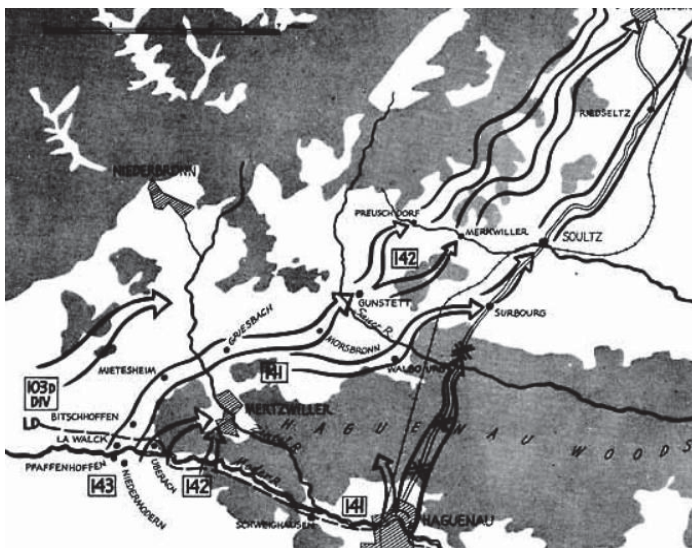
³² 76,2 mm

Both Erik and Jan suffered minor injuries³³ but both survived the fury until the U.S. Seventh Army counter-attacked in the last week of January 1945, recaptured lost ground north of Strasbourg and the attacks were halted by flooded ground near the Rhine River in mid-February, 1945.

636 TD resumed its advance in mid-March, 1945, reaching the German border for the second time. By the end of March, 1945, they pierced the Siegfried Line in the Wissembourg Gap and the Bienwald Forest, and drove to the Rhine River north of Mannheim.



Recommendation for the European–African–Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. (Original document)



The route of the 636 TD bataillon together with the 141/142/143 Inf. Regiments of the 36th Infantry Division.

Erik said: "Although we expected otherwise, I found out that passing the Siegfriedline was quite easy".
 "At their border, the Germans built large strokes of heavy concrete 'dragon-teeth', sometimes over a meter high, in order to prevent enemy tanks crossing into Germany. They looked impressive and dangerous but, after the mines were cleared and our M10's had settled with some lousy pillboxes, the obstacles were easy to pass:

we just threw sand over them with a few bulldozers. Problem solved..."

³³ Erik got a schrapnel wound in the leg so, if he had stayed in the US army a bit longer, would have earned the 'Purple Heart'.

And: *"Then we entered the first villages on German soil and the civilian population here mostly surrendered without resistance; all over the place we could see white flags and bedlinnen hanging from the windows. Later I found out that when to run up the white flag and surrender to us was a crucial question for them. Doing so too early meant disobeying the Nazi authorities who were demanding a fight to the finish; doing so too late could trigger a violent reaction by us. In the larger cities, the situation was often different. Here, resistance was more intense because all too often, the local Nazi bigwig called upon his townsmen to fight to the death and when they did (often on gunpoint) he then fled just before we attacked".*



Siegfried line

During all this fighting, Erik lost some good friends, one of them being his former commanding Officer, Elmer Metzner, which I am partly named after.³⁴

Erik said once: *"One friend though survived the war: Douglas Ables. He had been very important to me those first three months in Alsace. Actually, you could say that he was the main reason³⁵ that I am now able to write these memoires.*

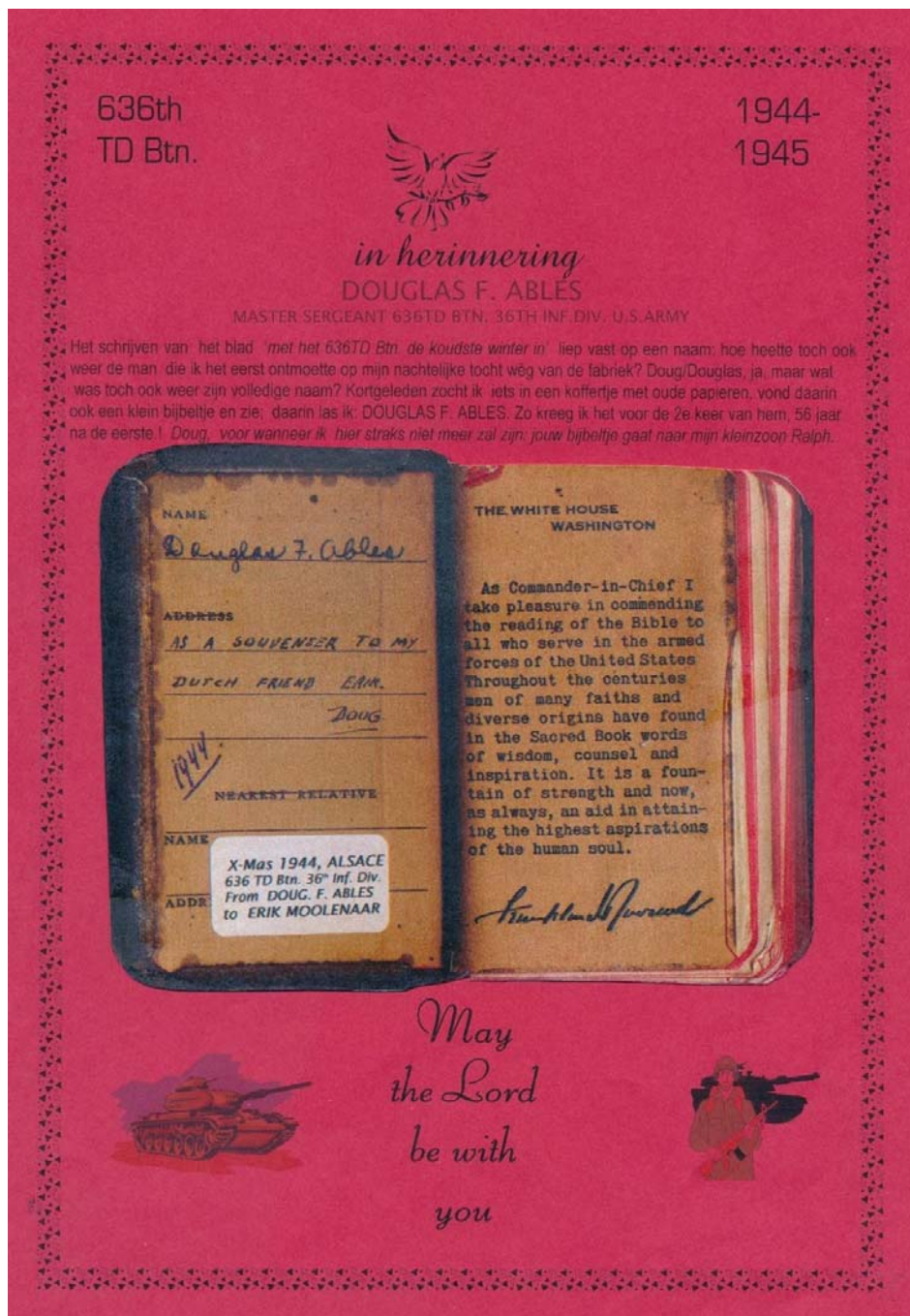
On march 28, 1945 we had to say goodbye, because I was transferred from 636 TD to HQ 36th Division. Because our advance went in the same direction (southern Germany) we were still in touch from time to time. Sadly enough that ended after the end of the war; although I tried to find him a few times, I never saw Douglas again".³⁶

Place reserved for foto Douglas Ables

³⁴ See 'Those involved'

³⁵ The second reason was sheer luck...

³⁶ See 'Those involved'



Heavily hampered by his illness and by his limited computer knowledge, Erik made this 'In Memoriam' for Douglas Faibanks Ables in 2001.

In memory of Douglas F. Ables, Master Sergeant 636 TD BTN, 36 Inf. Misc. US Army

When writing my memoirs about 'with the 636 TD Btn. into the coldest winter' I got stuck on a name. What was the name of the man I first met on my nightly journey away from the factory? Doug/Douglas yes, but what was his full name again? Recently I was looking for something in a briefcase of old papers, also found in it a small Bible, and lo, I read DOUGLAS F. ABLES in it.

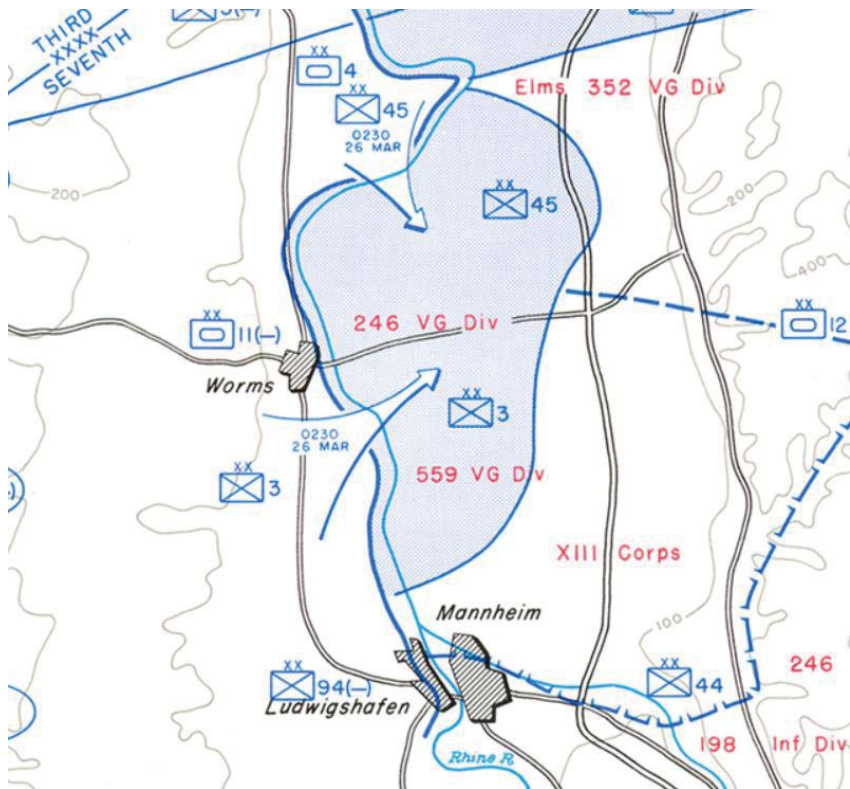
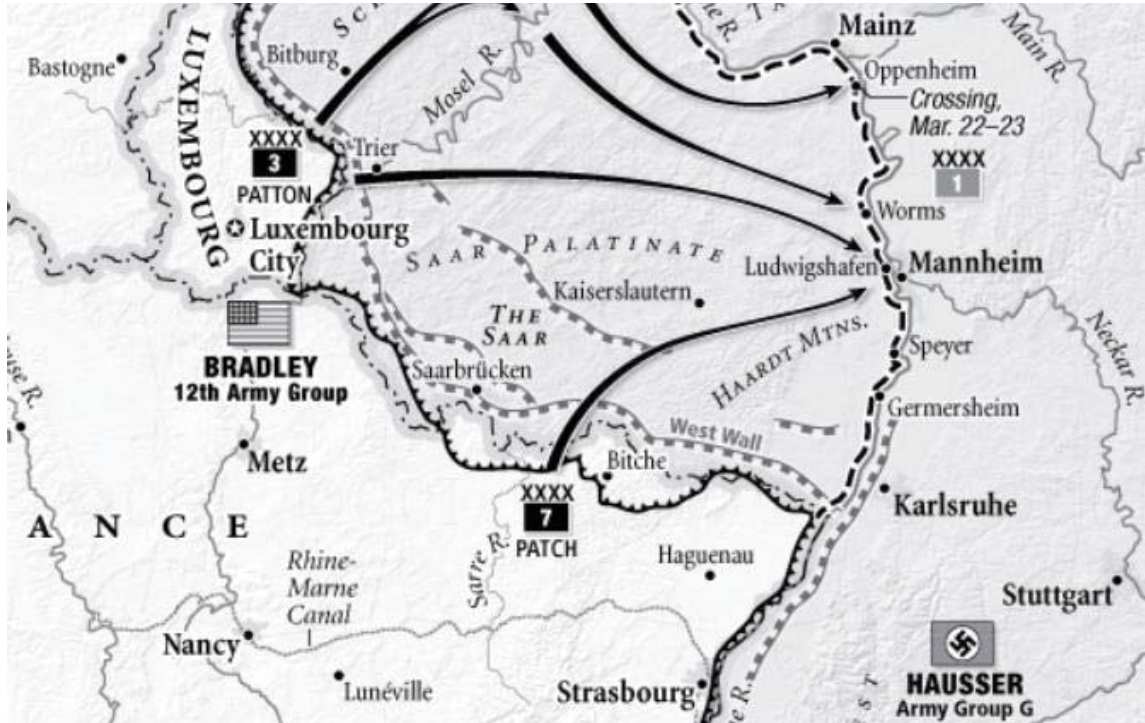
That's how I got it from him for the second time, 56 years after the first!
Doug, when I'm not here anymore: Your Bible goes to my grandson Ralph.

Rhine crossing: Images



They built us a nice bridge: 636 TD crossing the Rhine river in the Mannheim-area.
(Original 2 fotos by Erik Moolenaar, april 1, 1945)

Genealogie Moolenaar



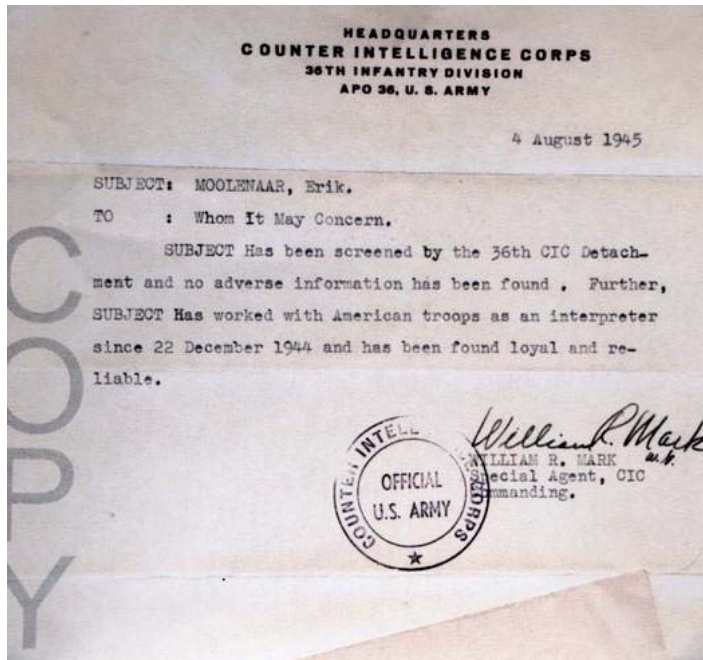
Rhine crossing 36th Infantry division and 636 TD Battalion, March 30, 1945



April 12, 1945. A sad day, also for Erik. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died at 63.
(original foto Erik Moolenaar)

A new day

Meanwhile, due to the CIC reliability check, their presence in the 636td had become known to the headquarters of the 36th US Infantry Division. There, Lt. Col. Grady C. Durham commanded the 'Military Government Section'.



Clearance from CIC counter Intelligence (original document)

As this unit became more and more important now that they had to restore order in occupied Germany, they were desperately in need of German speaking interpreters.

So, on March 28, 1945, just before his battallion crossed the Rhine, he 'claimed' Erik and Jan when he heard that both spoke four languages fluently. Their school German, French and English meanwhile had changed into practical language: German from the work in the factory, French from dealing with the Alsatians and English.

In addition, of course, their native Dutch and GI English from the time they spent in the 636 TD. Erik: *"we were assigned to military government field officers; from that moment on, I was active in the area of operations of the 36th Division under Captain (later Major) Philip Broadhead. As an interpreter, I had to deal with temporary facilities to replace government tasks that could no longer be performed by Germans. In addition, we had to collect data on the thousands of malnourished and mistreated Displaced Persons - men, women, and children - who, like me, were forced to work as slaves in German factories and fields. The all wanted only one thing: to go home³⁷, as soon as possible and alone if necessary. But the latter could not be tolerated: tens of thousands of wandering people heading to all corners of the world who could only get food by robbing: it was not always easy to convince them of the impossibility of their wishes".*

"Furthermore, the refugee columns fleeing the Soviet-occupied parts of Europe included Nazi collaborators from eastern European countries. We also had to pick out soldiers from the German Army 'Ostlegionen' and/or Waffen SS units. Later, they were forcibly repatriated from the Western occupation zones to the Soviet occupation zones of Austria and Allied-occupied Germany".

³⁷ Exceptions were often the people from Eastern Europe ('Ost-arbeiter'). The horror stories about the way the Russians raged in the territories they conquered had also reached the labor camps. Many of them stayed in Western Europe or even emigrated to the USA.

Genealogie Moolenaar

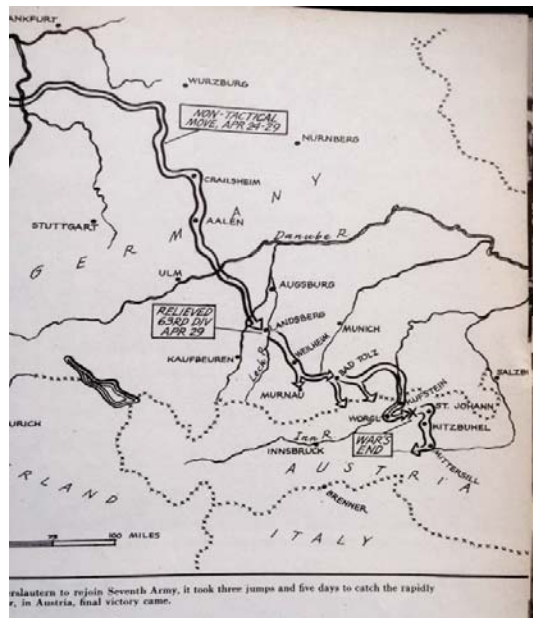


Kaufering 4

However, he kept a number of photos from that time in a secret place in our house. As a naughty boy I found them at one point and looked at the pictures. I only partially understood what I saw, but now, years later, I understand all too well what my father must have seen there.



Kaufering 4



The road of the 36th infantry division through Germany.
(foto taken from the T-Patch remembrance book)

My father must have noticed that I was secretly looking at the photos, because at some point they had disappeared. Later he sent them, along with many other war memories, to the NIOD³⁸, he told me later. After his death I found the letter he wrote in 1988 to the Director of the Dutch National Institute for War Documentation: *"Before that however, I had already been part of a spearhead that was focused on the liberation of the Hurlach / Landsberg concentration camp³⁹. I received the order to 'corral' the entire population of the town, from the youngest to the oldest inhabitant, so that the troops could lead the people through the camp as it had been found during its liberation".*

³⁸ Dutch National Institute for War Documentation

³⁹ Hurlach, also called Kaufering IV, was a satellite camp of KZ Dachau, 1½ km. north of the citycenter of Kaufering. On April 29, 3000 prisoners were in the camp. The camp was liberated at the end of April by a unit of the 36th Inf. Div.

On the same day, C.I.C., Hq. 36th Inf. Div. made an extremely shocking photo report of 19 images. I still have postcard-size prints in my possession and, to serve history, I will send them to you”.



Scene near Kaufering-4. Messerschmidt 262. (Original foto by Erik Moolenaar april 1945)

After the (dirty!) job near Kaufering was finished, his team continued south, once again through villages littered with white flags and bedlinnen, and finally took HQ in Bad Tölz, most probably in the old SS-Junkerschule.

From here, Erik and Jan got another task: Hunting for Nazi War criminals.

With a lot of freedom, they drove through the countryside of Southern Germany, the area where a lot

of high-ranking Germans possessed second homes. Especially in the Tegernsee-area (where there was still fighting going on) they met a lot of high-ranking German officers, but they weren't looking for small prey: Erik and his team went for the top: Göring, Frank, Axmann, Eichmann, Himmler, Bormann, Mengele, Dietrich, Jodl, Keitel etc.



The villa of 'Reichspresesprecher' SS-Obergruppenführer Max Amann, Tegernsee. This villa became a central point of the allied forces in the Tegernsee area and possibly Frank was brought to this place after the arrest. Anno 2021 it is still there. (original foto Erik Moolenaar, may 1945)



Chow in the garden of the Max Amann-villa, Tegernsee
(original 2 fotos by Erik Moolenaar, may 1945)

In connection with this, there was one action that he fondly remembered throughout his life: the arrest of Hans Frank, the Nazi governor general of Poland, and the translation of the first interrogation of this Nazi leader by Captain Broadhead.

Genealogie Moolenaar



They loved jeeps: Erik's friend and fellow-interpreter Pfc (titular) Jan van Gemert.
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1945)



Pfc (titular) Erik Moolenaar, june 1945 (original foto Erik Moolenaar)

The arrest⁴⁰ (research is still going on on this subject)

As said, Erik was involved in the arrest of Hans Michael Frank (May 23, 1900 - October 16, 1946), a German politician and lawyer who served as head of government in Poland during World War II.

I will let him tell about these in his own words as he wrote them down in 1988.....

"Together with a Dutch friend - Jan van Gemert - who, like me, had worked as a forced laborer from mid-1943 in a munitions factory near Strasbourg, Alsace, I was part of the HQ of the 36th (US) Infantry division as a uniformed civilian with the rank of private first class. I served as an interpreter in the military government section, commanded by Lt. Col GRADY C. DURHAM.

Born from a Flemish family, the administrator was T-Sgt. LEO H. GENN. As an English, French and German speaking interpreter, I myself was assigned to the Field Officer, Captain (later Major) PHILIP BROADHEAD with T-4 ELMER G. HAND as his driver. Together we formed a Division-AMG team. My friend Jan van Gemert was assigned to Captain NORMAN COHEN in the same position".

"After a rest period from 1 to 24 April 1945 in the region around Kaiserslautern, the division returned into action at Kaufering/Landsberg. In the following period the Military Government Teams were active within the area of operations of the 141st, 142nd and 143rd Infantry Regiments with Captain BROADHEAD's team in that of the 141st."

"From our HQ in Bad Tölz, the village of Tegernsee was our target and, as ordered, I questioned members of the local civilian population about any Nazi Party bosses still present. Most of them however, had flown, to Austria or even further. The first promising message came near Tegernsee: HANS FRANK should still be on site. We were given the location of his villa in Fischhausen am Schliersee, a small lake a few kilometers east of Tegernsee. Later on I found out that the name of the villa was 'the Schoberhof'. I was given some extra instructions on what to do and to say when we rang the bell and the door would be opened by someone in a normal way".

"We' in this case were Captain Broadhead, his driver T-4 Elmer G. Hand and me. My instruction was that, if the door were indeed to be opened in a normal way, I should ask whether this was Hans Frank's house. If the answer was affirmative, whoever opened the door would be immediately pushed aside by me and the three of us would enter the house" rather forcefully".

"This all happened accordingly and I remember a well-dressed woman opening the door introducing herself as Mrs Frank, although I can't say this with 100% certainty anymore. I remember, after we broke into the parlor, a person in full military uniform, apparently of high rank, stepped into the parlor. I had to ask who he was and what was the reason for his presence in this house. He introduced himself by a name I don't remember and stated that he was visiting as a friend of the Frank family. It soon became clear to us that he was very offended when it turned out that we were not paying attention to him at all".

⁴⁰ See for more information xxx

"When it became clear that Frank was not present, I was instructed to quickly ask probing questions about his whereabouts. But unexpectedly the woman proved to be very helpful and without hesitation she said that Frank had recently moved to his country house in the hills not far from Fishhausen⁴¹. On our staff-map, she pointed out where we could find the house, and after answering in the negative if there was a telephone connection to that spot, we assumed we would be able to reach Frank's mansion by surprise".



Frank's villa in Fischhausen am Schliersee: the Schoberhof.

"It was well into the afternoon and as far as I can remember there were hardly any American troops in the area, although from time to time we could hear sounds of gunfire that proved that there was still fighting going on. Since neither the presence of German units could be established, we decided to go there alone. Captain Broadhead and I were each armed with a pistol, T-4 Elmer G. Hand had a carbine at his disposal".

"The region seemed lonely; no house or farm was visible until we saw the sought-after house at a slight elevation, at the end of a driveway estimated to be 50 meters long. We left the jeep with the driver on the road, walked to the house which was completely blinded and banged on the door. It opened immediately and we saw an SS-man in black uniform".

⁴¹ In the village of Neuhaus, approx. 1½ kilometer away. Josephstalerstrasse 12

"Again I was instructed to ask if Frank was present. This time the answer was in the affirmative, whereupon we pushed the SS-man aside and entered the house. After a few steps we found ourselves in a somewhat larger hall; armed SS men in black uniforms stood or sat around the walls. I can't remember the exact number now; it must have been a little over ten".



Haus Bergfrieden in Josefstal: the office of Hans Frank in Neuhaus. Frank's office was in the house on the right. The house on the left was built after the war.

"Taking into account the number of doors in the hall, several rooms could be Frank's office. Following instructions, I barked at those present to show us Frank's room. Everyone was still silent - I don't remember even one of the SS saying anything during the whole action - and we were formally assigned to a door. Captain Broadhead stepped in, I followed him and the door closed softly behind us".

In a spacious but somewhat dimly lit room we saw Frank, dressed in civilian clothes, sitting behind a large desk. What came to mind was the sheer number of artifacts - especially ecclesiastical - on display. A large gold-coloured statue of Mary is still well in my memory (when Frank was questioned on this subject he stated that he was a Catholic ...).

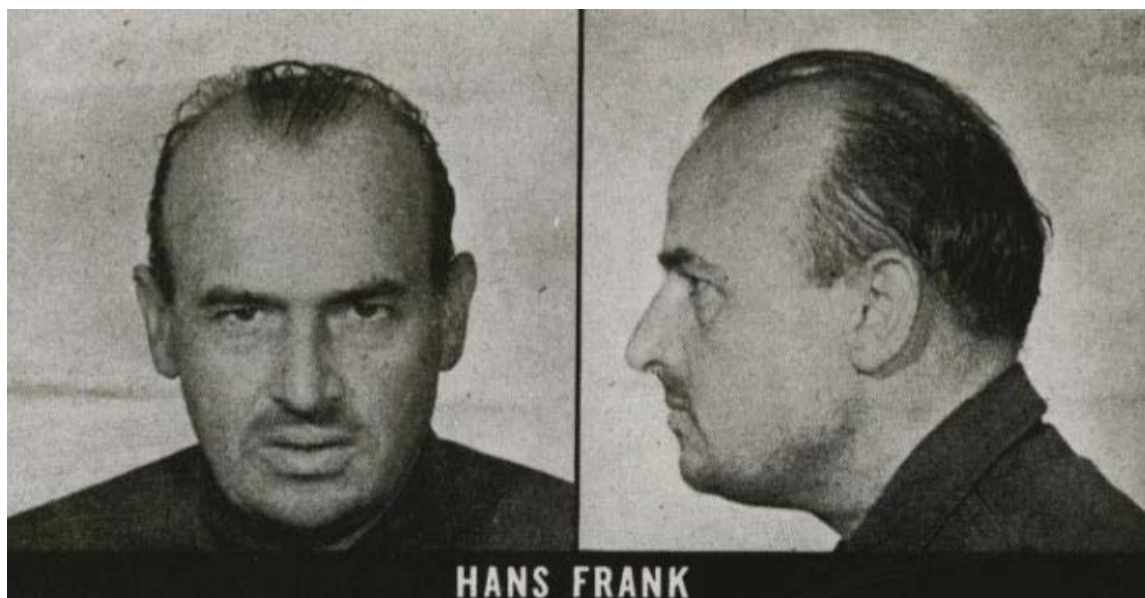
Frank appeared to speak English; in that language he introduced himself to Captain Broadhead. The latter then asked me all the questions he (Broadhead) would ask in English and would be answered by Frank in the same language, to repeat in German, and compare the answer with the answer Frank gave in the English language".

"Unfortunately I can't remember any of the many questions Captain Broadhead shot at Frank at the time and the answers he gave him. I remember that the answers I got from him in German always matched what he had told Captain Broadhead in English".



Source: T-Patch news of the 36th Infantry Division

"Frank's attitude towards us was polite, as if someone payed him a pleasant visit: not bluffing but not submissive either. I clearly remember a statement from him: after Captain Broadhead told him that he should consider himself arrested on war crimes and that he would be taken to division headquarters as a result, he replied that he had no objection. He literally added - and for the first time with much pathos - "I am the only lawyer in the government and everything I did was legal".



One of the first fotos of Hans Frank after his arrest, may 4, 1945 (foto: internet)

"How convinced he was that no one could harm him became clear when he got up, walked to the door and barked at the SS men in the hall: "Wartet hier"⁴². In doing so, he apparently wanted to make it clear that he had come with us in his own free will, convinced that he would be back soon".

"To be on the safe side, I asked for the magazines from the SS-machine guns; I couldn't carry them all, so I threw most of them out where it had become pitch dark. In the light of our flashlights Frank walked quietly with us, talking, but we didn't answer at all. Arriving at the jeep, Frank took a seat in the front, next to the driver. With Captain Broadhead and me in the back, we drove to division headquarters and handed Frank over to the MP-commander".

I do not remember us taken anything with us from the house and I want to declare that we have handed over Mr. Frank to the MP in good health and that we had nothing to do with the ill-treatment that took place later"⁴³.

"No doubt Captain Broadhead then reported to division headquarters; I had nothing to do with that of course, nor was I heard about the action later (after all, I had no official status!). However, on my farewell and return to the Netherlands, Major Broadhead made a statement of his own accord in which he confirmed my part in this three-man action. Later, it was a great pleasure for all of us to learn that after Frank was once incarcerated and imprisoned in Luxembourg, he had slit his wrists in a suicide attempt. Then we knew his persistent self-confidence was finally broken!"



They searched all southern Germany and parts of Austria for warcriminals.
Erik at the Brenner pas. (Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, may 1945)

⁴² Wait here

⁴³ Upon his arrival in prison, he was assaulted, probably by members of the US Rainbow Division. Still envisioned by the horrific images of liberated Dachau, the GI's took their horror and anger out on the prisoner. Later, Frank made several suicide attempts and was transferred to Bad Mondorf in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on May 20. There he remained interned with other prominent figures of the Nazi-regime until the end of August.

Hans Frank was not the only Nazi captured by the 36th Infantry Division in Southern Germany. Elements of the same division captured fieldmarshall von Rundstedt and, most important, on May 8, 1945, Herman Göring. The commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, the president of the 'Reichstag', head of the Gestapo, prime minister of Prussia and Hitler's designated successor was taken prisoner. Göring surrendered to the Americans in full military regalia.

Expecting to be treated as the emissary of a defeated people, the Reichsmarschall was shocked when his medals and marshal's baton were taken away and he was confined in Prisoner of War Camp No. 32 in the Palace Hotel of Mondorf-les-Bains, Luxembourg, known to its inmates as the 'Ashcan'.

Also after the war had ended, the search went on. The teams searched the whole of Southern Germany and Austria. Erik went as far as the Brennerpas, well over a 100 kilometers away from Bad Tölz.

Shortly after the war had ended, captain Broadhead was promoted to Major and the Military Government Section of Col. Durham was transferred to a new location: Geislingen an der Steige, 27 kilometers north of Ulm.

Here the team could start building a new German society. Secretly, many Germans were not all that dismissive of an American occupation, but the prospect of a conquest by the Soviets aroused enormous fear.

The stories of the diabolical beatings had already preceded the Red Army.

So there were lots of

refugees in the area who wanted to stay away from the US-Russian dividing line that, a few years later, would be the border between West and East Germany.

Erik: *"Everybody had to be registered, rightful inhabitants, foreign refugees, former slave workers, ex-prisoners etc. An enormous administrative task. All ex-soldiers were gathered and were, one by one, interrogated in an ongoing search for war criminals. Also, as part of the allied mutual agreements, certain soldiers (mostly 'Waffen SS') that*



Pfc Erik Moolenaar in Geislingen (Southern Germany).
T patch & buttons 636 on his uniform
(Original foto Erik Moolenaar, June 1945)

had apparently fled from the new Russian zone, were sent back, which wasn't an easy job".."

The thing Erik liked most was that they didn't have to fear for their lives anymore at every corner. They still had to beware of mines and unexploded ammunition and there were still fanatic Nazi's wandering around, but most of them chose to quietly disappear under the radar.

Genealogie Moolenaar



HQ Mil. Gov. Section Geislingen.
(Original foto Erik Moolenaar, june 1945)



Military Government Office in Geislingen city center.
(Original foto Erik Moolenaar, july 1945)



A quiet sunday at the HQ of the MGT in Geislingen.
Standing from left to right: T5 Joseph Stangle, Lt. Edgar O. Kamphoefner, Lt. Col. Grady C Durham, Maj. Phillip Broadhead, Maj. Preston H. Longino.
In front: George R. Dean, Erik Moolenaar with dog 'Rolf'.
(Original foto Erik Moolenaar, june 1945)



Showing the Germans what they did during the war. From left to right: T5 Joseph Stangle, Lt. Edgar O. Kamphoefner, Lt. Col. Grady C Durham, T-sgt. Leo H. Genn.
(original foto Erik Moolenaar: used for publishing in T-Patch 36th division news, july 1st, 1945)



Erik Moolenaar and T5 Joseph Stangle at work in HQ Geislingen.
(original foto Erik Moolenaar july 1945)

In Geislingen the team finally got more spare time, which they used for some 'sightseeing'. Erik and Elmer Hand took a jeep and set for Ulm, of which the city center was completely destroyed during the allied bombardments.

Erik said: *"On this trip we passed several PoW 'camps'. Thousands of ex German soldiers were rounded up in the open air because we were unprepared for these huge numbers. They were put on the spot in improvised*

Prisoner of War Temporary Enclosures". The Germans, who voluntarily had gone into American captivity, thought they would be treated according to the Geneva Convention, but they would be disappointed in that..

Erik: *"In open fields enclosed by barbed wire, on the edge of a village (sometimes their own) or small town was not exactly what they had expected. Only a few, like officers and sick) had permanent shelter; the great masses however had to use tarpaulins, dig holes in the ground or even bivouac in the open air. The spring of 1945 was generally hot and sunny but heavy rain in early May turned the camps into mud wastes which was a sad view. They were the enemy, but now it was our turn to help: with cigarettes and candybars, because there was hardly anything to eat in those first days of imprisonment".*



Prisoners of war near Tegernsee. (original foto Erik Moolenaar, May 1945)

Such a PoW-policy was in no way the intention of the American occupiers, even though their treatment of the prisoners of war was for some time not in accordance with international law of war. Just two weeks after the end of the war, the Americans began to release prisoners who were considered politically harmless. The first camps were already closed at the end of June 1945.



Ulm, july 1945



Top: Erik Moolenaar, protestant church 'das Ulmer Münster',
Bottom: Hildegardbrunnen, Elmer Hand
(original fotos: Erik Moolenaar)

Genealogie Moolenaar

In the Military Government Section, Erik had another good friend with which he worked closely together: Lt. Edgar O. Kamphoefner.



July 1945. On the brink of going home (original foto Erik Moolenaar, Geislingen July 1945)



Pfc Erik Moolenaar and Lt. Edgar O. Kamphoefner (original foto Erik Moolenaar, Geislingen July 1945)



Lt. Edgar Otto Kamphoefner with the two MGS-dogs. The dog on the right is 'Rolf'

Paris

"Hi Eric, Major Broadhead wants to see you. It seems you and I will be off for Paris on an emergency mission early tomorrow morning".



Major Broadhead and Erik Moolenaar ready to go to Paris.
Both are smiling, probably because they were off to Paris....
(Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, June 1945)

"That was the voice of Allan Carr, normally the driver of Capt. Norman Cohen, but what his words meant wasn't quite clear to me".

What was this emergency mission? I remember that my father told me this story several times, because he liked driving very much and was also very proud of the way he got his license. Well, he told me that he and Carr had to take Captain Broadhead to Paris for 'officers-business' but also he had to report personally about the Frank-arrest. Where or to whom I do not know.

Erik said: *"It was understandable that he needed an interpreter on an emergency mission to Paris; Carr and the French language were not exactly in tune. But he didn't talk about who would come along as co-driver. So I went to receive further instructions and to my great surprise I learned that Carr had been instructed to teach me the art of driving that same afternoon".*

"Necessity breaks laws: besides me there was not only no one who could act as an interpreter, but also no one to be able to go along as co-driver⁴⁴. Under the instruction of Allan Carr, it became a day of driving in laps for me, forward and backwards until I could almost blindly do it. I could gain practical experience the next day, on the less busy routes. And so it happened: over flat land, hilly countryside and the winding mountain roads of the Vosges, until on the way back after 300 miles (482 km) solo riding I got my official driving permit..."⁴⁵

NOTES

- To be issued only after strict and practical examination.
- Permit will be authenticated by commissioned officer immediately after test for each type of vehicle concerned.
- Where testing facilities do not permit cross-country driving, permit will be marked "limited" after each type of vehicle concerned.
- List accidents below. If more than three are entered to the permit holder, his driving ability and mental attitude should be investigated before issuance of new permit.

RECORD OF ACCIDENTS
(List all in which permit holder is involved)

Date _____ (1)
Responsibility _____
Estimated cost of damages _____
Officer's initials _____

Date _____ (2)
Responsibility _____
Estimated cost of damages _____
Officer's initials _____

Date _____ (3)
Responsibility _____
Estimated cost of damages _____
Officer's initials _____

MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S PERMIT

Valid ☒ with ☐ without glasses

38050251
(OPERATOR'S A. S. N.)

O. O. Form No. 7800
(Revised Feb. 7, 1945)
(U.S. G. P. Form No. 28)

1 JULY 1945

I CERTIFY THAT ERIK MOOLENAAR, P.O.
(Name and rank)

has demonstrated proficiency in driving (par. 16, A/R 800-15) the types of vehicles listed below as per signed authentication.

TYPE VEHICLE	AUTHENTICATION (Signed by a commissioned officer)
Car, belt truck	
Car, passenger	
Motorcycle	
Truck, heavy	
Truck, light	
Truck, medium	
Tractor	
Truck, tractor (self-propelled)	
Truck, cargo, 1/2-ton	
Truck, cargo, 3 1/2-ton	
Truck, cargo, 4-ton and larger	
Truck, wrecker (self-propelled)	
Vehicle, wheelbarrow, motor	
Special	

Copy of the original drivers license of Erik. Note his ASN-number!
(Original document, July 1, 1945)



Scene enroute to Paris. (original foto by Erik Moolenaar, June/July 1945)

⁴⁴ Paris was roughly 650 kilometers away from Geislingen

⁴⁵ Since he joined the US-forces Erik, in combat situations, had driven all kinds of different vehicles, but never with an official licence and never having to think about correctly staying on the roads. "in a fully armed 30-ton M10 or during combat nobody asks for your license", he smiled once

The aftermath – Going home

After handing over Mr. Frank to the MP's commander, this story ends for Erik. He and his AMG-team went back to business as usual: gathering information, searching for other important Nazis and restoring order and regularity in the Bavarian society. Not from Bad Tölz, but from Geislingen as we have seen earlier.

A few days after the arrest, a great relief for everybody, the war in Europe was finally over. In all countries there was a lot of work to be done to repair the damage. Erik, together with his friend Jan, wanted to get home as soon as possible⁴⁶.



Lt. Col. Grady C. Durham, signing the discharge papers
(original foto Erik Moolenaar, august 4, 1945)

In august 1945, on their request, they were released from the US-army and they left Geislingen on august 4 bound for Zevenaar, The Netherlands. How to get there was no problem: Captured German cars enough! They were offered a beautiful Mercedes Benz 170 to take them home.

Erik said: *"We were also given civilian clothes which one of the sergeants had found in a custom clothing store."*

In addition, I received 1440 marks in Allied currency "in recognition of the services he rendered while serving as a driver and interpreter in the Military Government Department of the 36th Infantry Division". I also took home: 3 boxes of American cigarettes, 4 bars of toilet soap, 1 tube of toothpaste and 5 candybars. This, of course, was all precisely defined in a document, replete with official stamps and signatures".



Erik in the Mercedes 170, just before leaving Geislingen. (Original foto by Erik Moolenaar, august 1945)

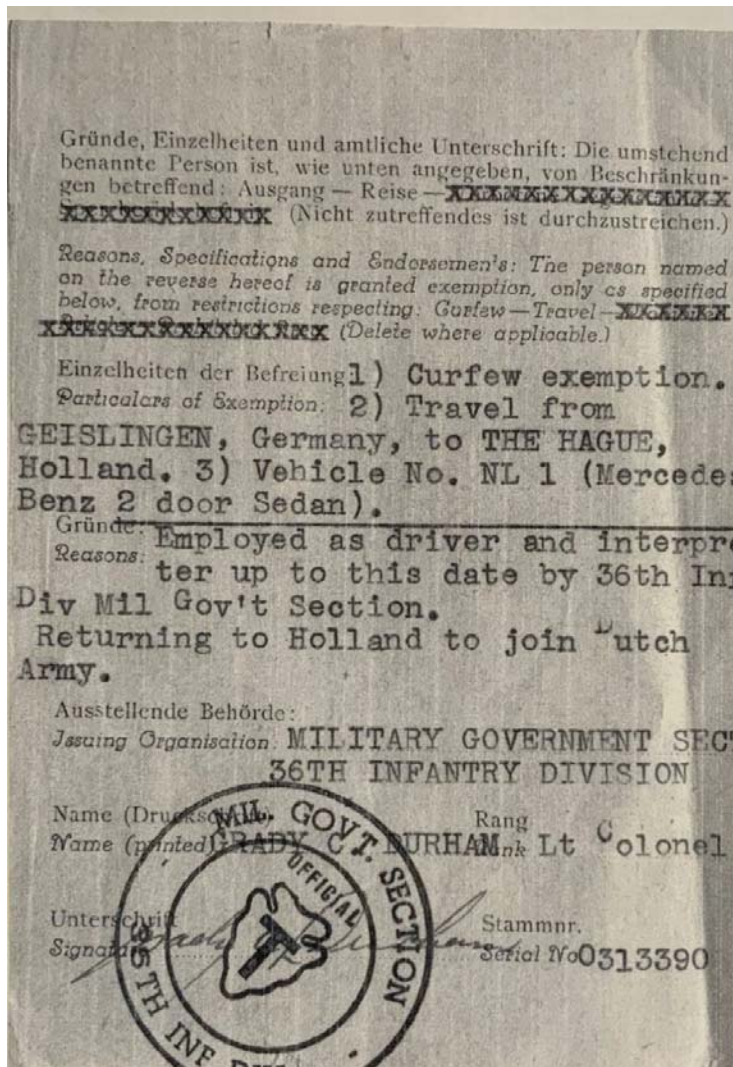
⁴⁶ They both intended to emigrate to the USA as soon as possible. That would have been very easy with their references. For both, history would decide differently...



(original foto Erik Moolenaar, Geislingen august 4, 1945)

Erik's Dutch DP (Displaced Persons) registration card. (Original document)

"In the evening of August 5 we reached the Dutch border where, despite all the official papers, we had to hand in the car to the military authorities (the thing was just too attractive!). Then we had to wait for transport options to The Hague. There were long waits (and little food) at the various transfer points, but on August 8, I was finally home".



Home!! Home they were, but the underlying intention was that the goodbye would only be temporarily: with their trackrecord they would gain entry to the US without much difficulty. But, as so many times, life didn't go as planned.

While making preparations for a new life in the USA, Erik met his future wife Leny shortly after his return and nothing came of the intention to go to America. Jan van Gemert found himself in the same situation. Finally he went back to Germany in the service of the British army in Germany and Erik? Well, he married his Leny, got two children and three grandchildren and visited his old employer, the paint factory in The Hague.

The official curfew-exemption pass: 4 different versions: US, German, French and Dutch... (Copy of the original)

His boss was impressed with the ease in which Erik could switch languages and asked him if he was willing to lead the relaunch of the export department.

Erik: *"That's where my interest in international trade came in! I accepted the offer and traveled for over 35 years across three quarters of the world: Europe, the Middle East, all of Africa, the West Indies and South America, until I retired from that company in 1985. After my retirement I bought a computer, took lessons and wrote down my life experiences. I also started a new hobby: genealogy" (which I took over after my retirement...)*

And now, as I write this, all is history. Jan van Gemert married Gerda van Doesburg. They got 3 children and 5 grandchildren. They say that old soldiers never die, they just fade away. So, inevitable, Jan 'faded away' in Haarlem on October 25, 2003. Erik followed him almost exactly two years later in Drachten, October 15, 2005.

From Geislingen to the Hague: impressions

Erik later wrote: "At first we travelled via small inland roads and we saw that the bulk of Germany's rural areas had escaped war relatively unscathed. Heidelberg for instance, appeared to be completely untouched by the ravages of war.

He remembered: "The hills were covered with pine forests thick with trees and clear bubbling streams ran down into wide lovely valleys, all intensively cultivated. The people were friendly (we weren't in uniform anymore) and we even met a farmer that traded bread, fruit and lovely-tasting white wine in exchange for petrol".



On the way home: passing Cologne (Köln)
(original 2 fotos by Erik Moolenaar, taken en route, august 5, 1945)

However, when we came further north, we reached the large German cities along the Rhine and in the Ruhr-area. En route we saw the extensive war-damage. Where buildings once stood, we now saw a kind of rock landscape of rubble, with here and there remains of buildings and facades that still were standing. The country here layed completely in ashes and I thought that it was so devastated that they would never be able to rebuild that”.

“My first reaction on the blasted city centers, the refugees and all the misery we saw was: sorry, but you started it all. This is the payment for Rotterdam, London, Landsberg and all the rest. But the further north we travelled, the more pity I took on the people: German girls and women clearing stones with their bare hands, one by one. And, apart from very young boys, almost no men at all”.

“The view of a completely destroyed Cologne was more than sad, even for us, who had seen the horrors of war. Luckily, the cathedral was still there and appeared to be undamaged”.



Scene enroute from Geislingen to The Netherlands. (original foto Erik Moolenaar, august 1945)
(unknown city)

Genealogie Moolenaar

ARTICLES DETAINED

at Red Cross, A. C. C.

1. Description of Articles:—
1 Mercedes Benz
NO. 101.
Miscellaneous Articles
prohibited M.G. Law 161

2. Name and address of Owner:—
E. Moolenaar.
Switzerland 105

3. Passenger on S.S.

Member of crew Yes

4. Arrived from Passenger (German)
20 Centre ZENAR

5. Proceeding to Switzerland

6. Date of seizure 5 Aug. 45

7. Address to which articles are to be returned:
As above

Signature of Officer [Signature]
 Date 5 Aug. 45

NOTE—One copy of this form to be handed to the Owner.
 PSS 1817 4-45 150 Rev. 45

Too beautiful: Seized by the Dutch government without any payment (original document)



On the way home in seized German clothing (original foto Erik Moolenaar, taken enroute, august 4, 1945)



Enroute home (original foto Erik Moolenaar august 1945)

Genealogie Moolenaar

Geislingen, Germany

This will certify that the following items and money were given to ERIK MOOLENAAR, Dutch National, in recognition of the services rendered by him while working as driver and interpreter with us in the Military Government Section of the 36th U. S. Infantry Division.

The 1,440 marks in allied currency were given to him over the period 22 December 1945 - 31 July 1945:

3 Cartons of American Cigarettes

4 Pieces of Toilet Soap

1 Tube of Tooth Paste

5 Candy Bars

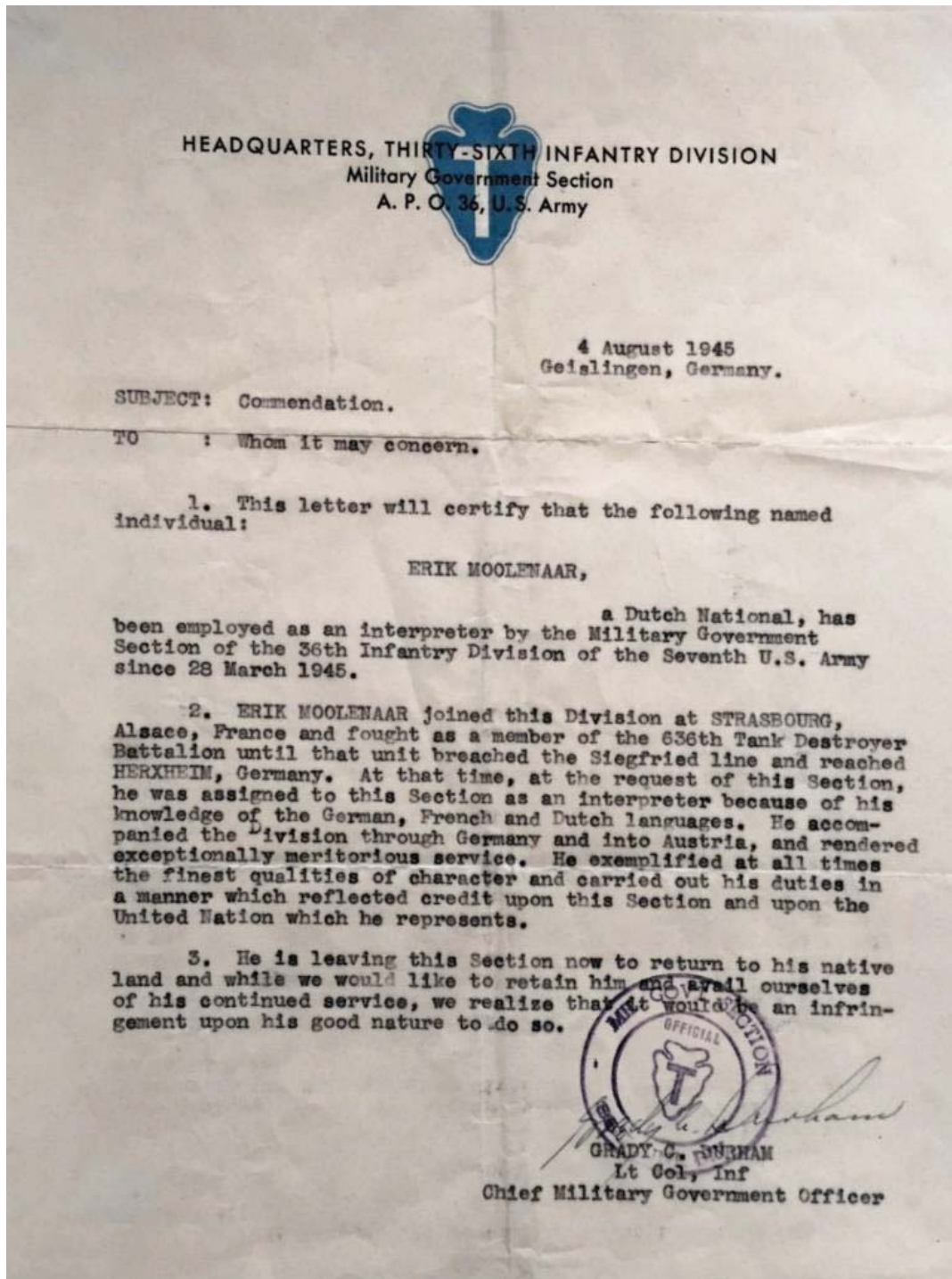
1,440 Marks in Allied Currency.

4 Days' "K" Rations
L. H. Genn

Leo H. Genn
T/Sgt Leo H. Genn, 32238694
Chief Clerk, Mil Gov't Section
36th Inf Div



Everything documented! (Original document)



Official Letter of Recommendation from Lt. Col. Durham. (original document)

Here, the war 'adventures' of Erik Moolenaar end. As so many, he returned to normal life, which is described in another part of his lifestory. Anno 2020 however, there is a lot more to tell about this period, especially when I, being the author, took over his genealogical hobby and miraculously got into contact with Niklas Frank, the man, Erik always wanted to meet.

But that's another story.....

Those involved

1) Then the Military Government Section.

Roster—36th INFANTRY DIVISION	
YOUNG, Hamilton D., Pfc., 76 Hubbard Ave., W. Asheville, N. C.	ARTHUR, C.
ZIEBEL, Anthony R., Pvt., 4770 No. Hopkins St., Milwaukee, Wis.	BARTORILLI
HEADQUARTERS	
36th INFANTRY DIVISION	
MILITARY GOVERNMENT SECTION	
COMMANDING OFFICERS	
POWHIDA, John F., Maj., 4657 Locust St., Philadelphia, Pa.; SCAD.	BRANDES
DURHAM, Grady C., Lt. Col., Jackson Barracks, New Orleans, La.; CMGO.	BRANNON
OFFICERS	
BROADHEAD, Philip, Major, 27 Fairview Ave., Willow Grove, Pa.; MGO.	BRENNAN
COHEN, Norman, Capt., 347 Broadway, Long Branch, N. J.; MGO.	BRIDGES
FUTTERMAN, Charles J., 2d Lt., 165 S. Berendo St., Los Angeles, Calif.	BROTHER
HALL, Richard, 1st Lt., 110 Bellview Ave., Newport, R. I.	BROWN
KAMPHOEFNER, Edgar O., 1st Lt., New Melle, Mo.	BROWN, N. J.
KURYLA, Ivan A., 1st Lieutenant.	BRUNO
LONGINO, Preston H., Major, 40 W. Winthrop Rd., Kansas City 5, Mo.; MGO.	BURNS
McFARLING, Herbert W., 1st Lt., Panhandle, Texas.	BUTTER
STOUT, George G., Capt., 428 W. 10th St., Erie, Pa.	CAHILL
ENLISTED MEN	
CARR, Allan W., T-3, 315 Ann St., East Lansing, Mich.	CAMPBELL
CELELLA, Philip G., Sgt.	CANAD
CHESELKA, Andrew, Pfc.	CANNI
COLLEY, Dudley J., S-Sgt.	CASE
DEAN, George R., T-6, Route 2, Gainesville, Ga.	CASS
EDDY, Allen C., Sgt.	CHAST
FEIWEL, Henry, Pvt.	CHILD
GENN, Leo H., T-Sgt., c/o Dr. M. S. Shaine, 50 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y.	CHILL
GROSS, Benjamin, Cpl.	CLAR
HAND, Elmer G., T-4, 192 East Duncan St., Columbus, Ohio.	COCK
PASSERI, Guy, Pvt., 127 1/2 Elm St., Cortland, N. Y.	COLE
SASSO, Frank D., Pfc.	CORL
STANGLE, Joseph, T-5, 568 Summer St., Arlington, Mass.	COTT
SWAROWSKY, Anthony L., Pfc., 430 Grand Concourse, New York, N. Y.	CRAI
VARANELLI, Stephen A., T-4.	DEMA
SPECIAL TROOPS	
COMMANDING OFFICERS	

Not by name, but in a photo taken from the 'Pictorial history the Texas Division in combat', page 5 of the 36th Division roster. Erik and Jan are not on this list because, although they both were Private first class, they had no official rank within the division.

Lt. Col. Grady C. Durham was in command and so Erik's boss.

He was the officer that 'sjanghaied' Erik and Jan from the 636 TD battallion.

From the T-Patch remembrance book 'Pictorial history of the Texas Division in combat', page 5

2) The AMG-teams

The Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (originally abbreviated AMGOT, later AMG) was the form of military rule administered by Allied forces within their occupied European territories during and after World War II.

This form of controlled government has been implemented in countries such as Germany, Italy, Austria and Japan.

It was not uncommon for individual citizens with the necessary knowledge to be integrated into the existing AMG organizations. (Source: Pictorial history the Texas Division in combat', no page number.)



36th Infantry Division - Military Government Section headquarters Geislingen, July 1945.
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)

3) The individuals

- A) The Commander of the Military Government Section of the 36th ("Texas") Infantry Division: **LT. COL. GRADY CLIFFORD DURHAM**. Born 28-04-1907 in Louisiana, USA, died september 7, 1996 in Loudoun County, Virginia, USA. Buried at Arlington National Cemetary, section 60, site 6492. Grave registered on 'findagrave.com', ID 13227764. Father: John Pinkey Durham, mother Minnie Reese Durham, spouse: Eileen Catherine Durham.

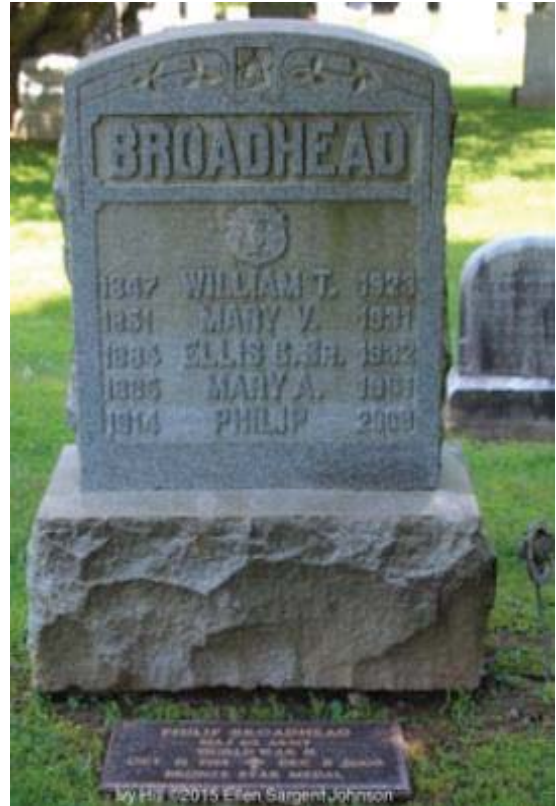


Grady Clifford Durham in 1945 and Arlington 1996



Genealogie Moolenaar

- B) **MAJOR PHILLIP BROADHEAD**. Born October 11, 1914, died December 8, 2008 (place unknown). Buried at Ivy Hill cemetery, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, USA. Registered on 'findagrave.com' ID 149228124.



When Erik joined the Military Government Section, Phillip Broadhead held the rank of Captain. In June 1945 he was promoted to the rank of Major. This was also the rank he had when he left the army.

Philip Broadhead
PHILIP BROADHEAD
Major, Infantry,
Military Government Office
141st Infantry Regiment.

Original signature Major Philip Broadhead 1945

Genealogie Moolenaar

- C) **T-4 ELMER G. HAND.** Born Geboren 11-10-1923 in Lima, Allen County, Ohio, USA. Died 21-08-1995, Lancaster, Fairfield County, Ohio, USA. Buried at Maple Grove Cemetery, Lancaster, Fairfield County, Ohio, USA. Grave registered on 'findagrave.com' ID 22106530.



Technician Fourth Grade (abbreviated as T/4 or TEC4) was one of three United States Army technicians established on January 8, 1942 during World War II. Those with this rank were often addressed as sergeants. They were non-commissioned officers, like sergeants, but had no authority.



Elmer Hand and Erik Moolenaar. Note Erik's right hand: he is wearing his T-Patch ring and on his collar the 636 td button

Genealogie Moolenaar

Fotos below: Elmer Hand in Geislingen, june 1945. (All original fotos by Erik Moolenaar, june 1945)



D) First Lt. Edgar O Kamphoefner.



Edgar Otto Kamphoefner

GEBOORTE 7 Nov 1915
New Melle, St. Charles County, Missouri, USA

OVERLIJDEN 22 Jun 1964 (leeftijd 48)
Saint Louis, St. Louis City, Missouri, USA

BEGRAAFLOCATIE [Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery](#)
Lemay, St. Louis County, Missouri, VS [Aan kaart toevoegen](#)

PERCEEL E O 1413

GEDENKPLEK-ID 81329252 · [Bron bekijken](#)

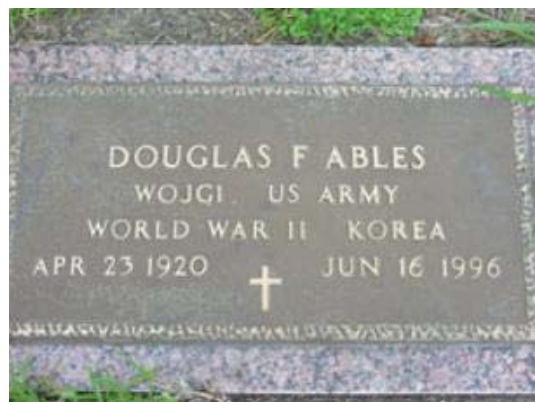


Original foto Erik Moolenaar, june 1945



E) Master Sergeant Douglas Fairbanks Ables.

In Erik's life story, this man was very important to him. I wrote about that already. During his life, Erik tried to find Douglas a few times; first via veteran-organizations and later via the embassy. Without success.





WO Douglas F. Ables

GEBOORTE 23 Apr 1920

OVERLIJDEN 16 Jun 1996 (leeftijd 76)
Travis County, Texas, USA

BEGRAAFLOCATIE [Cook-Walden Capital Parks Cemetery and Mausoleum](#)
Pflugerville, Travis County, Texas, VS

PERCEEL Sec H

GEDENKPLEK-ID 53885002 · [Bron bekijken](#)

Foto toegevoegd door [The Closet Skeleton...](#)

F) Captain Elmer John Metzner.



Capt Elmer John Metzner

GEBOORTE 28 Aug 1918
Pennsylvania, USA

OVERLIJDEN 21 Mrt 1945 (leeftijd 26)
France

BEGRAAFLOCATIE [Trinity Cemetery](#)
Erie, Erie County, Pennsylvania, VS [Aan kaart toevoegen](#)

PERCEEL Section: I 52 Grave 7

GEDENKPLEK-ID 108685643 · [Bron bekijken](#)

Foto toegevoegd door [Sandra Walczak](#)

I mentioned captain Metzner before in Erik's story. Most probably he was Erik's commanding Officer when he served on the M10's (12/1944 until 3/1945). I am quite sure that it is this 'Elmer', because Erik told me so once.

I never asked my father, because I always thought I was named after his close comrade in arms: Elmer G. Hand. However, after some searching I found out that this 'Elmer' died in 1995, which was not in line with what my mother wrote in her memory-book: *"You are named after a friend of your father that died in his tank in 1945".*

How to find an 'Elmer' who was killed in the Alsace early 1945 in his tank and who could have had a relationship with Erik?

Internet brought the solution: First, I searched for all 'Elmers' in the 36th infantry Division. Then I checked which ones died in those days. Result: Nobody. Then the same research in the annals of all TD battalions, active in the Alsace area: 601, 636, 645, 648, 692 and 822. Result: only one Elmer died in those months and Bingo! This Elmer was part of B-company of the 636 TD, which at that time was linked to the 141 regiment of the 36th Infantry Division. All lines were therefore correct with this 'Elmer'.



Commanding B-company at the time was Captain Elmer John Metzner, an alumni of the Artillery Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, class 1942. Elmer was commander of B-company and was appointed S-3 (operations) officer of the 636 TD. On March 20 he was hit, not in his tank, but at the commandpost of Company A, by fire from a German 'Nebelwerfer' in Schweighausen am Moder. He was seriously injured and he died the next day (March 21, 1945) from his wounds.

On March 20 Company "C" moved forward with the 143d to WISSEMBOURG. Companies "A" and "B" continued to work with the infantry in an attempt to find a soft spot in the SIEGFRIED Line and break through. Pillboxes were fired on, in some cases with good results. Captain Elmer J. Metzner was seriously wounded and his driver, Tec 5 Frank J. Novelli, killed near "A" Company Command Post. Lt Donald H. Raabe and Sgt Robert L. Brittain of Company "B" were wounded. Captain Metzner later died from his wounds and the Battalion mourned the loss of an excellent officer and faithful soldier. He will long be remembered by members of the Battalion for his excellent work and cheerful disposition.

From the battle report 636 td march 1945

So, I was most likely⁴⁷ partly named after this man: Elmer John Metzner.....

⁴⁷ I am 99,9% sure of this. It will never be 100%, as I cannot ask my father anymore.

National Archives & Records Administration War Department Files

CAPT Elmer J. Metzner

Class 26-42

ID: O1168376

Branch of Service: U.S. Army

Hometown: Erie County, PA

Status: DOW March 21, 1945



Killed in action serving with the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion

Silver Star



(Citation Needed): Elmer J. Metzner, United States Army, is reported to have been awarded the Silver Star under the below-listed General Orders for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy while serving with the 14th Armored Division during World War II.

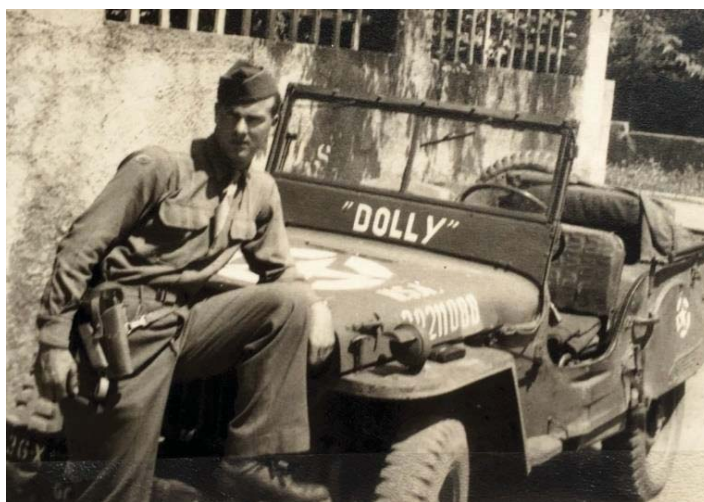
General Orders: Headquarters, 14th Armored Division, General Orders No. 66 (1945)

Buried in Trinity Cemetery, Erie, Pennsylvania

Section: I 52 Grave 7

G) Jan van Gemert, the war-friend of Erik Moolenaar.

Although Erik and Jan stayed in contact throughout their lives, I don't have much information about him. He lived in Haarlem, was born in 1923 and died also in Haarlem, The Netherlands at 25-10-2003. He was married to Gerda van Doesburg, had 3 children and 5 grandchildren, of which one of them was named 'Erik'....



Jan van Gemert and 'Dolly' (original foto Erik Moolenaar July 1945)

Annex 1: Clippings and documents



Government food vouchers 1941 (original document)



Government food vouchers 1943. 30 days only, where was day 31??
(original document)

4858/0
MACHTIGING

De ondergeteekende
geboren:
te:
verklaart zich er mede accoord, dat zijn werkgever zestig
procent (60/100) van zijn netto-loon, direct na de loon-
uitbetaling, aan:
.....
te:
straat en huisnummer:
overmaakt.

Ondergeteekende is er mede bekend, dat bovenstaande
verklaring voor den geheelen duur van zijn werkzaam-
heden in Duitschland, ook wanneer hij tusschentijds van
werkgever mocht verwisselen, van kracht blijft en dat
herroeping dezer machtiging slechts met schriftelijke
toestemming van het bevoegde Nederlandsche gewestelijke
arbeidsbureau kan plaats vinden.

....., den 194.....
.....

(stempel van het gewestelijk
arbeidsbureau) (ondertekening)

Onder netto-loon wordt verstaan het bedrag, dat overschiet
na aftrek van sociale lasten, belastingen en de strikt nood-
zakelijke kosten van het levensonderhoud, zooals deze op de
opdrachten zijn vermeld.

Ⓐ 36664 - '43 - I - K 983

Arbeidseinsatz: Erik had to sign for 60% 'later' payment... (original document)

Genealogie Moolenaar

GEMEENTE 's-GRAVENHAGE
CRISIS- EN DISTRIBUTIEDIENST
Goudenregenstraat 36

's-Gravenhage, 24 juli 1943

R 32670

De Directeur van den Gemeentelijken Crisis- en Distributiedienst verklaart,
dat aan *S. Moolenaar*
in verband met zijn tewerkstelling in Duitschland, de volgende speciale
punten zijn uitgereikt:

427 K. punten voor den aankoop van
overall

..... A.K. punten voor den aankoop van

..... G. punten voor den aankoop van

Te Directeur van den Gemeentelijken
Crisis- en Distributiedienst,
NIEBORG

Deze verklaring dient zorgvuldig te worden bewaard — desgevraagd in
Duitschland te worden getoond.

897 - 3 '43 - K 1185

INLEGVEL NO. DISTR. STAMKAART
317/45362

One overall allowed before travelling to Germany (original Document)



Erik's beret with buttons: The lone star of Texas and the 636 TD battalion
(original artefact)

CH

1 July 1945

ng grapher

ur I. Nortman

What were your
change from en-
sioned status?
n who have very
ved direct field

AM S. ROGERS,
Co. 142nd Commis-
sioned 11 June
1945. Personally I
didn't have many
reactions. My big-
gest problem is
getting used to the
men saluting me
first, and saying
Sir! But of course
that will come in
time. I realize now
that there is much
more responsibil-
officer but it has
ages.

WILHELM, Ros-
Co., 141st, Com-



at for so long, it
it.

RRISON, Shreve-
43, Commissioned
June 1945. It was
somewhat of a
thrill during the
ceremony. I had a
lump in my throat.
Receiving a com-
mission completes
my Army career.
You see I am one
of those lucky men
with 100 points
et I feel that it
as well worth it.
ry important to
else, yet the war
at.

M W. MUNROE,
Co., 142nd, Com-



The Military Government Section:

Its Problem: Germany's Occupation; Its Police Force: The 36th Division



Corp. Joseph Stangle, Lt. Edgar Kamphoefner, Lt. Col. Grady Durham, Military Affairs Officer, and T/Sgt. Leo H. Genn, Chief of Section, gather around one of their posters telling the people of Germany what concentration camps are like.

Three broad principles form the basis for Military Government: The first, control of the civilian population to make victory complete, or during combat operations, to expedite victory; the second, maintenance of law and order; and the third, the welfare of the governed.

Normally the Section is composed of the Chief Military Government Officer, with four officers and six enlisted men. The 36th Division staff has been augmented, however, with the designation of officers to work under the Section with the 111th Engineers and Div. Arty.

Combat Operations

During combat, the Section operates through the Regimental S-5's and the deployment of Military Government detachments. The regimental officers perform what are known as "first phase" duties. They go in with the combat troops, establish military government by posting proclamations, designating a burgomeister and handing down orders to him consistent with policies laid down by headquarters. Such initial orders usually cover burying the dead, cleaning the streets, establishing curfew, circulation and blackout restrictions, ordering all public officials to stay on the job until relieved, and in general seeing that the civilians stay out of the combat troops' hair.

First phase work is followed up by detachments which are dropped off by tactical units. During the plunge through Germany, the 36th placed detachments at Bergzabern, Herxheim, Schwabmünchen, Landsberg, Weilheim, Seeshaupt, Bad Tölz, Tegernsee, Kufstein, Kitzbühel

perhaps an equal number have been placed in camps awaiting repatriation. Italians have been sent to Italy; Dutch, Belgians, Luxembourgish and French have been sent to France, and Czechs to Pilsen. The Poles and Balkan people dominate the remaining groups yet to be evacuated.

G-5 and S-5's

Lt. Col. Grady C. Durham, of New Orleans, La., is the Chief Military Government Officer.

The real "first phase" Military Government work has been done by Major Philip Broadhead, Willow Grove, Pa., attached to the 141 RCT; Major Preston Longino, Kansas City, Mo., with the 142 RCT, and Captain Norman Cohen, Long Branch, N. J., with the 143 RCT.

These officers work as the S-5's of Regiments and through the Chief Military Government Officer, coordinate policies and procedures affecting the civilian population throughout the entire Division area. 1st Lt. Raymond F. Kent, Division Artillery, and 1st Lt. James A. Mitchell, 111th Engineers, perform the same functions with their respective units.

Section of Linguists

1st Lt. Edgar O. Kamphoefner, of New Melle, Mo., formerly of Headquarters Company, is Lt. Col. Durham's assistant at headquarters. His fluency in the German language has been a tremendous asset in Military Government work.

The wheelhorse of the headquarters staff is T/Sgt. Leo H. Genn, of New York, who speaks French, Flemish and German as well as he

From: T-Patch; 36th division news, July 1, 1945 (original document, part 1)



at for so long, it
it.

BRISON, Shreve-
43. Commissioned
June 1945. It was
somewhat of a
thrill during the
ceremony. I had a
lump in my throat.
Receiving a com-
mission completes
my Army career.
You see I am one
of those lucky men
with 100 points
yet I feel that it
was well worth it.
Very important to
else, yet the war
at.

W. MUNROE,
Co., 142nd, Com-



D. BENNETT,
Co., 141st Com-
missioned 27 May
45. There is not
very much dif-
ference in the
age as far as
I am personally
concerned. I knew
at I would be
back with the same
men so that meant
the change. The
only thing I no-
ticed which I find
is the men say-
ing soldiers they
expect for me as

Sported In Rome

sion veterans
eir T-Patches.
er units, they
ous blue ar-
right sleeves,
as well as the
resent units.
sporting the
er Chief of
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berg, Weilheim, Seeshaupt, Bad
Tölz, Tegernsee, Kufstein, Kitzbühel
and St. Johann. Some of these
remained for only a few days, but
most of them are still on the job
performing second phase or post-
combat military government duties.
As the Division advanced, they
passed under control of succes-
sively higher headquarters.

Problems of Occupation

While engaged in the occupation
of an area, the duties of the Sec-
tion take on a different complexion.
The S-5's of regiments or battalions
become liaison officers between
their commanding officers and the
Military Government detachments
in their areas. Where there are no
detachments, as in the case of
portions of three counties now under
Division control, the officers operate
as detachments, giving the proper
orders to the bourgomeisters and
seeing that the various regulations
are enforced. In fact, during this
third phase of operation, the entire
Division becomes engaged in the
support of Military Government.

Headache number one to the Mil-
itary Government section has been
the "DP's." No war in history has
seen such widespread displacement
of human beings, and the control, feed-
ing, housing, evacuation and re-
patriation of the millions of Dis-
placed Persons (civilian) found in Ger-
many and her satellite countries
has been a real challenge to the
Allied Armies. Coordinated by the
Military Government Section, the
Division has transported approxi-
mately 50,000 DP's to centers from
which they were repatriated, and

others have been sent to
Italy; Dutch, Belgians, Luxem-
bourgish and French have been
sent to France, and Czechs to Pilsen.
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ters staff is T/Sgt. Leo H. Genn, of
New York, who speaks French,
Flemish and German as well as he
does English. As Chief Clerk he
manages the office and supervises
the interpreters in the Section.
These include T/5 Joseph Stangle,
Arlington, Mass., a Bavarian-born
GI attached to the 142; Pfc. Anthony
I. Swarowsky, of New York, an
Austrian-born GI with 141, and two
Dutch boys, whom Lt. Col. Durham
calls "the pride" of his section. These
are Erik Moolenaar and Jan Van
Gemert, of Amsterdam, who joined
the section at Herxheim after fight-
ing up from France with the 636th
TD Bn. They speak English, Ger-
man, Dutch, French and GI Ameri-
can.

T/4 Elmer H. Hand, New York,
and T/5 Allan W. Carr, former police
sergeant of Lansing, Mich., are
classified as drivers but have per-
formed about every Military
Government function in the book.

"Sometimes when I get ready to
sleep at night I can see the thou-
sands of homeless French families
from the charred ruins of Corcieux,
Anould, Fraize and St. Leonard,
being trucked off to safety; the
nerve-frayed Alsations of Mittel-
wihr, Hunawihr and Riquewihr
being carried from their cellars;
the insane patients of Oberhoffen
and Bischwiller being loaded in
ambulances and six by sixes; the
"striped pajama" boys of Schwab-
münchen, Seeshaupt and Bad Tölz
being flocked into houses and fed,"
said Col. Durham. "Whether or not
anyone else ever knows what this
section did or not—those un-
fortunate people know. Aware of
this, I turn over and go to sleep."

Phillip Broadhead
PHILIP BROADHEAD
Major, Infantry,
Military Government Office
141st Infantry Regiment.

Signature of Major Phillip Broadhead 1945. (from original document)

EXTRA - Gœring Surrenders To ADC

SEE PAGE 3

In Austria T-PATCH 36TH DIVISION NEWS

Vol. 4, No. 1 SPECIAL EDITION 8 MAY 1945

VICTORY

Lt. Burke, 141st, Captures Field Marshal von Rundstedt

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, the brilliant Prussian military strategist, the designer of the Ardennes bulge, last week became the 30,000th prisoner to be taken by the 36th Division since the Riviera landings. The Reich's leading Junker surrendered to 2nd Lt. Joseph E. Burke, Sr. Petersburg, Fla., A Company, 141st Infantry, at Bad Tolz. When Lt. Burke entered Rundstedt's hospital residence, the field marshal, his wife and son had just finished dinner and were sitting before the fire.



Von Rundstedt revealed that he knew the Americans were near, but that he hadn't expected them until the following morning. Lt. Hans Gerd von Rundstedt, his son, spoke freely of his father's military career. The lieutenant said his father had last seen Hitler March 12 when the field marshal was relieved of his command of all the German Armies in the west. They were not nearly so surprised at the announcement of Hitler's death as they were at the news of their own capture.

In addition to von Rundstedt three others were taken as prisoners, the son, a chauffeur, and a medical aid man. The following events led to the capture:

Leading a night attack on Bad Tolz, the First Platoon, A Company, 141st Infantry met only scattered small arms fire. As they approached the outskirts, a German medic came out to surrender to Lt. Burke. Through force of habit (Lt. Burke was formerly a battalion interrogator) he started to question the excited prisoner.

The German mentioned von Rundstedt and mentioned that he was in town. The lieutenant, without hesitation, called upon ten men from his platoon to accompany him and radioed for a tank to lead the way. The captured Jerry led them to the hospital residence.

Halfway down the approach of the house, a hostile soldier popped his head out of the door. One member of the platoon took a shot at him but missed.

Lt. Burke ran for the front door. It was locked. Then he ran to the side entrance which led to the cellar. He

Rundstedt Enters CP (Can't See Page 5)

Truman, Churchill, Stalin, De Gaulle Proclaim Victory-Europe Day-May 8

Troops of the 36th Division received the news of victory on Austrian soil. The official announcement was broadcast simultaneously from Washington, London, Moscow and Paris by President Truman, Prime Minister Churchill, Marshal Stalin, and Gen. DeGaulle at 1300 hours Greenwich time today. Actual cessation of hostilities was to be effective at 2201 hours.

First news of Nazi Germany's surrender came yesterday, May 7, from a United Press correspondent. The unconditional surrender was made at 0241 hours in the schoolhouse at Reims, Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters.

The surrender was signed for Germany by Col. Gen. Gustave Jodl, the new German Chief of Staff. Gen. Bedell Smith signed for General Eisenhower. Maj. Gen. Suslapatov signed for Russia, and Gen. Francois Sever for France.

Repeatedly asked if they understood the significance of the terms, the Germans answered, "Yes," and said that they would be carried out.

A preliminary instrument to surrender in 15 pages took care of every contingency likely to arise out of the laying down of German arms. It gave directions for the formal handing over of the German Navy with its great fleet

After five years, eight months and four days the most unrelenting war in the history of Europe came to an end. Speaking almost five years to the day since he became Britain's wartime leader, Prime Minister Churchill told the world, "The German war machine is at an end. Hostilities will cease at one minute past midnight. Nazi Germany exists no longer. Its once mighty forces on land, sea and in the air have surrendered unconditionally."

Admiral Doenitz, Hitler's successor, told the German people, "The foundations on which the German Reich was built are a thing of the past."

As Churchill was speaking, President Truman proclaimed to the United States the complete, unconditional surrender, but both leaders pledged their countries to unremitting warfare against Japan.

"Japan with all her treachery and greed, remains unyielding. We must devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our task," said Churchill.

"Our blows will continue until the Japanese lay down their arms in unconditional surrender," said Truman.

The Soviet announcement of Germany's surrender was made for the first time in a Moscow broadcast.

With the surrender, the German Government, her military leaders and all her armed forces still at liberty became legally in the same category

(Can't See Page 5)

Austria Marks Sixth Foreign Country Entered By Division

When the 36th Division crossed into Austria, it marked the sixth foreign country that the T-Patchers had entered, Morocco, Algeria, Italy, France, Germany, and Austria.

The 36th has fought on one continent, Europe, but it has trained on three, North America, Africa, and Europe.

On September 9th, 1943 the 36th Division became the first American Division to invade continental Europe. On August 15th, 1944 the 36th Division invaded the French Riviera.

In France the 36th Division established an American Army record for consecutive days in contact with the enemy—over 200. In 25 months overseas the 36th took over 50,000 prisoners.

36th Arrests Publisher Of 'Mein Kampf'

Max Amann, dumpy Nazi publicist, the third man to join the Reich's National Socialist Party, was arrested by security troops of the 36th Division last week on a SHAEF warrant, charging him with war crimes.

The publisher of 'Mein Kampf', and former cell mate of Adolf Hitler, Amann has been out of headlines for years now and was living in quiet seclusion in his summer home overlooking the lake at Tegernsee.

What is written on his charge sheet was not revealed, but it is a common knowledge that his press was the mouthpiece of the Nazi Party.

A major in the last war, Amann tossed his business and personality behind Hitler. He participated in the famed Beer Hall putsch, and was elected to the Reichstag where he served as Press secretary to the government. He is listed in the German counterpart of Who's Who as a renowned writer, editor and publisher.

His last journalistic effort was to offer the facilities of his Munich plant to the 36th Division for the publishing of the T-Patch.

Internationally Prominent French Group Liberated By Four 142nd Infantrymen

After two years of captivity in an Austrian castle, a prominent French group, Premiers Daladier and Reynaud, Generals Weygand and Gamelin, the sister of General DeGaulle, and Borotra, noted tennis star, were rescued by four infantrymen of the 36th Division.

The four men were from Easy Company, 142nd Infantry. They had been sent forward by Lt. Col. Marvin Coyle, their battalion commander, who had seen offered the castle in surrender by the German major of the garrison here.

Riding a tank, the four doughboys reached the castle in the early evening, accepted the major's surrender, and stayed there while waiting for the rest of the battalion to come up.

On the following morning they were attacked by desperate SS troops, attempting to retake the castle and perhaps kill their former prisoners. The four men stood them off for a while, then the tank in the castle gate was socked out.

The German major armed his men

to aid the 142nd men in holding off the SS troops who were trying to storm the castle. The German major was killed during the defense.

At 1500 hours the next afternoon the battalion drove through the SS ranks and opened the road to the castle for

(Can't See Page 5)

36th Promises Tojo For 36th

The Division's British counterpart, the British 36th Division, has cabled the following message to officers and men of the 36th "Texas" Division:

"The British 36th Division extends heartfelt congratulations on your capture of von Rundstedt. We hope to have Tojo for you shortly..."

The Ghosts



For the deceased Axis—Adolf and Benito, No Glory, No Spoils, No Victory.



Daladier



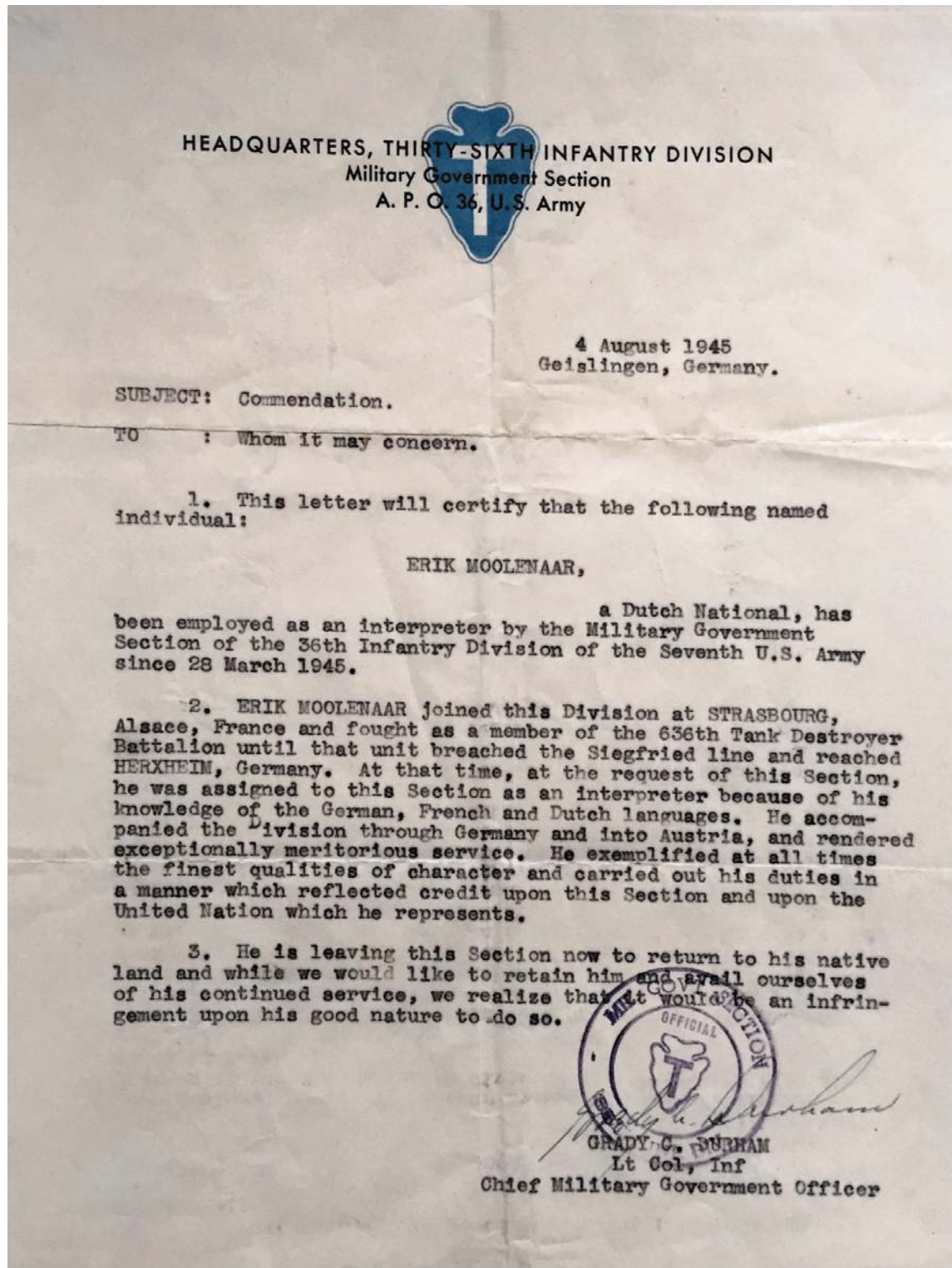
Reynaud




Weygand



Gamelin



Document of recommendation - 1 (original document)


HEADQUARTERS, THIRTY-SIXTH INFANTRY DIVISION
Military Government Section
A. P. O. 36, U. S. Army
141st Infantry Regiment

26 July 1945

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that from the period beginning 15 April 1945 and ending about the 10th of June 1945, **ERIK MOOLENAAR**, Dutch National, has served in an exceptionally meritorious manner as interpreter and driver for me. His conduct, his character, efficiency and loyalty to me and to the Allied cause during the final phases of the destruction of the German Armies in Southern Germany and Austria have attracted the attention of all with whom he has had contact and have further heightened my and their regard for Holland and the Dutch People.

Specific mention must be made of the fact that he played an important part in the capture of Dr. Hans Frank, Nazi Military Governor of Poland and a ranking War Criminal of this war.

Frank, Nazi Gauleiter of Poland, Seized By Capt. Broadhead, AMG

Germany's notorious Reichsminister Frank, Gauleiter of Poland, perpetrator of Jewish extermination pits, and a ranking war criminal to the Russians, was last week trapped in his office by Capt. Phillip Broadhead of the Division AMG team.

The fanatical Reichsminister had been living for three days in his office which was located near the gateway leading to his summer home, overlooking the lake where leading Nazis frolicked after seeking refuge from oft-bombed Berlin. Capt. Broadhead stated that the sadist's home exhibited a painting collection of which the value is estimated at fifty million dollars. Some of the paintings were reputed to have been part of the Warsaw collection, the greatest of Polish historical art works.

Philip Broadhead
PHILIP BROADHEAD
Major, Infantry,
Military Government Officer.
141st Infantry Regiment.

Frank made his first appearance in the world's newspapers as Reichsminister of Justice during the days of the Berlin purge trial. Later he was a minister without portfolio and his last assignment was Nazi boss of all occupied Poland.

When interviewed the thoroughly-worried Nazi explained that he knew of the elimination camps in Poland, but that he did not approve of them. Like all the others, he placed the blame on the orders from the number-one man, Adolph Hitler.

Confined, he made two requests: one, his wife and family should not be harmed; two, they should not be informed of his plight until he was taken away. During the night Frank secured a sharp instrument and slashed at his wrists in a vain attempt to commit suicide.

The attempt to deny justice was foiled and Gauleiter Frank was led away to face the Russian tribunal.

W. B. D. A. T. C. H.

Document of recommendation - 2 (original document)

Annex 2: Miscellaneous fotos



Erik (with his camera) in Geislingen, july 1945. (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



T-sgt. Leo H. Genn in Geislingen, July 1945 (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



T5 Allan W. Carr (1917 – 2013) with dog 'Rolf' (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)

Genealogie Moolenaar



T5 Allan W. Carr (1917 – 2013) (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



Pfc Erik Moolenaar: Daytrip to Ulm
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



T5 Joseph Stangle (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



As he wears a 'major' insignia: This is probably Major Preston H. Longino
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



Pfc Erik Moolenaar. Geislingen july 1945. (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



T-sgt. Leo H. Genn in Geislingen, July 1945 (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



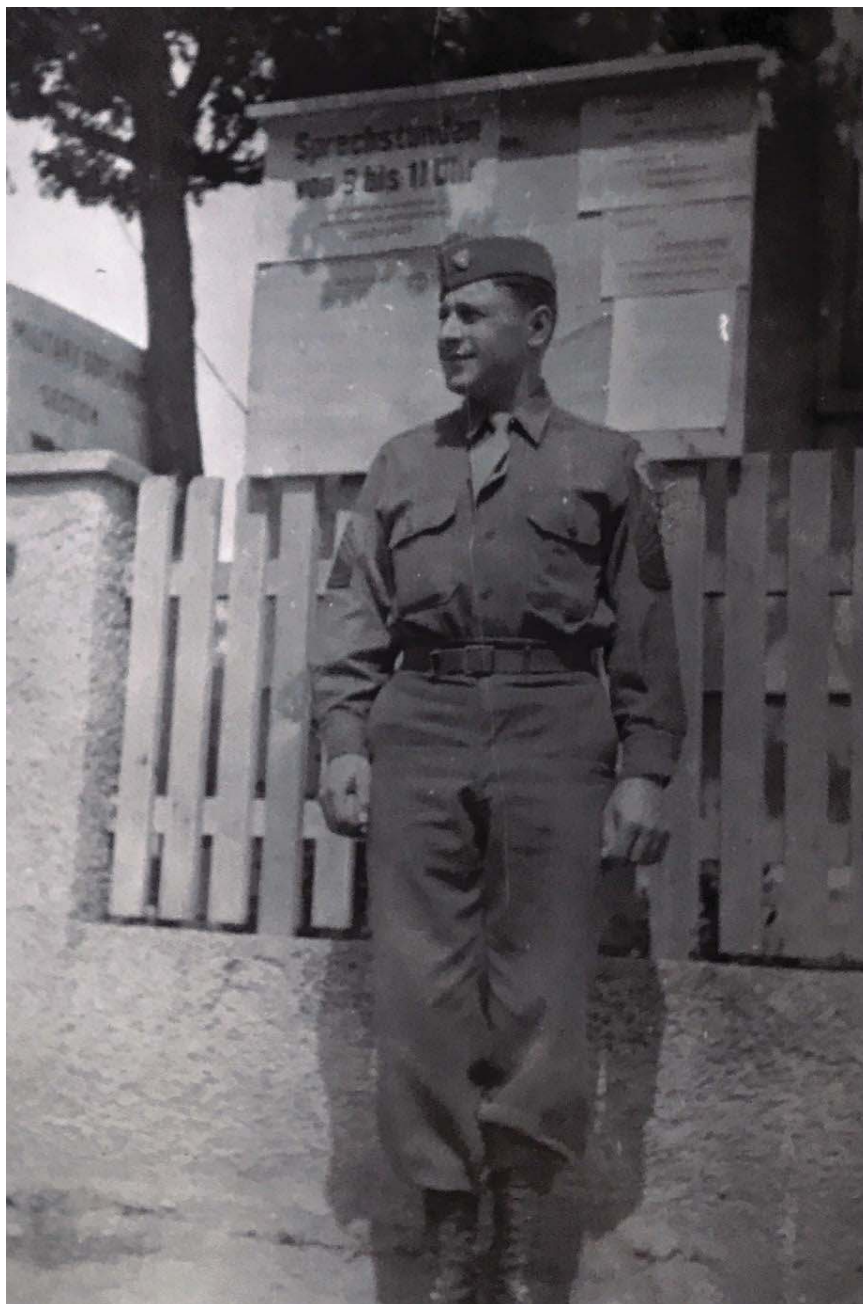
Chasing war-criminals: enroute to the Brenner - Border of Germany and Austria
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



Erik: *"This is how I found southern Germany in april 1945"*
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



Major Broadhead and Elmer Hand at the Brenner, July 1945.
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



T-sergeant Leo H. Genn in Geislingen, July 1945
(original photo by Erik Moolenaar)



T5 Allan W. Carr in Geislingen. The name of the other soldier is not known.
(original foto by Erik Moolenaar).



T5 Joseph Stangle (r) and T5 George R. Dean (l). Geislingen, July 1945. (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)
Both were also interpreters.



Probably Capt. Cohen (original foto by Erik Moolenaar)



Lt. Edgar Kamphoefner, Erik Moolenaar and Leo Genn with two German beauties⁴⁸ (names unknown)
(original foto Erik Moolenaar July 1945)

⁴⁸ Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force issued orders forbidding all fraternization between American soldiers and German civilians except in the course of official business. The ban didn't last.....

For those who have fought and died for it,
freedom has a taste that the protected
will never know.

Postscript from the author

The war-years shaped Erik. The adventurous but calm and well-brought-up boy from a working-class family in The Hague became more assertive, had little fear and became a confident man: he had come to know the world the hard way. However, he never hated the Germans (*"most of them never choose for this"*, he said).

In 1949 the English, British and French zones merged and formed the Federal Republic of Germany. In the early 1950s, the country had already partly been rebuilt, with an economy that functioned reasonably well and cities that were liveable again. *"An incredible achievement,"* he said. Like so many others, he had hated the Nazi-regime, yes. *"But when I saw how they did rebuild their country after the war, after all that misery and destruction, yes, that made me happy".*

Did Erik ever go back to Germany? Yes, because he and Lenie loved the country. In the 50's and 60's, in our black 'Volkswagen Beetle'⁴⁹, we spent a lot of holidays camping in the beautiful countryside of Southern Germany and Austria.

And what about the Tegernsee-area? Again yes. He told me that he and my mother Leny visited the area several times during vacations in the mid-1950s. Not a 100%, but knowing my father, I'm pretty sure they also went on the same journey together that he took with his division years before. Neither Erik nor my mother ever talked to us about that holiday or their visits to the Tegernsee-area.

As said, 43 years after the war, Erik started with his memoirs in 1988. As he was a collector and always kept everything that could be of some use in the future, I was able to complete his story and fill the gaps he left.

After the war, Erik and Lenie lived a good life, although the first years were quite difficult due to the necessary reconstruction of the Dutch society after the war.

All the way until the inevitable end, they were happily married for 57 years, raised two sons and got three grandchildren.

*Drachten, The Netherlands
August 2021
D.G.E. Moolenaar*

⁴⁹ I still remember her registration number: ND 40 – 18

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