



**Robert
Whitworth**
Army

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May 21, 1925 - Feb 5, 2013

BIRTHPLACE: Abilene, KS

SOLDIER DETAILS

DIVISION: Army, 1187th

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

SERVED: Mar 12, 1943 -

HONORED BY: Mike Rohly

BIOGRAPHY

Robert Lee Whitworth. THE 'RUN-AWAY' CONVOY - as World War II winds down in the E.T.O. 2 January 1946 - 7th Army Headquarters - Germany. Orders were issued for me, another LT and fourteen EMs to pick up 128 German prisoners from Camp Heilbronn, travel to an area in Northern Italy, secure 128 American vehicles (salvaged from war in Italy) and drive them (or tow them) back to Mannheim. Needless to say it turned into a long nightmare. The 'Volunteer' German prisoners could not drive American trucks and could not speak much English (didn't want to learn). The weather was cold and snowy. Since I was a twenty year old officer - 'in charge', the prisoners weren't anxious to take orders from me. After several days on the site, we finally formed the Convoy and headed back to the American Occupation Zone. Our problems with dead batteries, no Prestone, bad tires, short of gasoline, frozen radiators, etc, were overcome by miracles (another story). The Convoy departed the parking lot on a beautiful sunny morning, at daybreak. Morale was high, even among the German prisoners. (Maybe they knew something that we Americans didn't) As the Convoy moved through the beautiful Italian countryside, into Germany up to the outskirts of Munich, I was enjoying the scenery and looking forward to rendezvousing at the Red Cross Donut Center on the outskirts of Munich. Munich is a large city with lots of streets and alleys. When the lead vehicles reached the designated check-point things looked good. Suddenly, it hit me - no other vehicles were arriving. Finally the other LT and the vehicles with American soldiers arrived - few other vehicles showed. A total of twenty-six formed the remaining Convoy. We had lost 102 trucks and about 100 German prisoners had ESCAPED. They knew the Munich territory and had driven their trucks down alleys, streets, behind big buildings, etc. I reported directly to General Keyes, 7th Army Commander, the following morning, thinking my Army career was over and I would be going back to America. Following a discussion with the General and his staff, it was concluded that there was poor planning on their part. I had not received sufficient guards, proper briefings or German prisoners who were qualified to drive American trucks. The American MPs recovered most of the vehicles but few prisoners - (All German prisoners except SS troops were released six months later). The Lord was watching over my time in Germany. Following the great Convoy screw-up, I was assigned to attend the University of Heidelberg, followed

by a choice assignment up in the British Zone of Occupation. I commanded a transient mess halfway between Kassel and Bremerhaven, staffed by fifty German, civilian cooks, ten American staff officers and a unit of forty Polish guards. We fed American soldiers coming from America as replacements for those going home after the war ended - a Great Experience!