

INTRODUCTION

Manfred Donath was twenty-one years old when the war ended. He was born in Löbau (a small town 55 kilometers east of Dresden), on June 15th, 1924. There is no such person as a “normal” person whom one can pick as an example of the youth of any culture or historic period. Obviously, all people are unique and have lived an unique life. However, I chose to focus on Manfred because his life gives us a good look at the challenges the German youth of the World War Two era faced, and at what happened to many of them after the war.

CHAPTER ONE

I tried to concentrate on the glowing tip of my cigarette. I don't know if this was an escape from the pain and horror of the moment, or because I was thinking of how my life was so much like that cigarette. I had prepared for the moment, all soldiers do, especially soldiers that have experienced the acceleration, and terror, of combat. I had willingly joined the armed forces with full knowledge that someday I would be called upon to face the flame. Now that flame had begun to consume me. As I watched that tip glow and the small tendril of smoke waft into, and disappear in the air, I knew that as the fire consumed it and reached the end of the cigarette, it would extinguish itself, and me.

CHAPTER TWO

After the first days of scouting out and sweeping the country free of scattered British and American Airborne troops, we formed a defensive line on the north flank of the St. Lô Peninsula. The Hitlerjungen division was on the south flank. Before long, it was clear that we no longer could hold the Allies at the coast and we moved, temporary fighting position by temporary fighting position, back toward Versailles. At each new position, we would dig in and wait for the enemy. When we began to get into any sort of a fire fight, we packed up and moved back to another defensive position, where we dug in again. Fighting in an area crisscrossed by hedgerows makes for very close range fire fights. You think you are safe and clear one moment, and then realize that the enemy is just on the other side of the field, or even on the other side of the hedgerow.

CHAPTER THREE

Soon after regaining consciousness in the Scottish POW camp, a German doctor making rounds came and examined me. I am not sure if my bandage had ever been changed or not. It stank. When the medic with the doctor undressed my wound, he quickly stepped back and clutched his hand over his nose and mouth. I tried to look at my shoulder, but could not move my head. What little I did move hurt like hell. The doctor bent down, took one look, turned to his aide, and said, "Get this guy up to the castle immediately. Tell them to prep him for surgery. I will be up as soon as I finish rounds down here."

CHAPTER FOUR

Over-production was a wasteful "capitalist" concept. Under the Communist philosophy, if the quota was not quite reached, the manager would be urged to do his part, but not chastised. The result created a system where it was better to fall short than to over-produce. The managers in the supply chain worked on the same premises. Thus the further along the supply chain an operation was, the more it normally fell short of its quota.