

Lesson VII: Robert Wright Liberation 75 Local Connections (southwest Florida resident)

Questions:

1. Watch the American Veteran's Center YouTube video titled, *The Battle of Remagen*, [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alNvjCbp4wo>]. Then read the section below from an interview with Robert Wright

"...our Battalion would go and help – whatever it was – building bridges or demolition work – and we were trained in all of that. One of the most – if you want me to continue – one of the most famous bridges that we involved is well known to most everybody – the Ludendorff Railroad Bridge at the Rhine River. Ludendorff Railway Bridge was intact, but the Germans – the American Army was on the American side – the French side, and they were preparing the tanks and trucks – preparing to go across to get into Germany, but they needed a bridge – a large bridge like the Ludendorff Railway Bridge to go across the Rhine River, which was a major river at that time. And the Germans, in order to prevent the Americans from getting across in their tanks and trucks, mined it; they put explosives all in the bridge, getting ready to blow it, but our engineer unit was called and we worked as infantry then the infantry division came into being and with our extra efforts, we fought back the Germans who were on the other side of the Rhine River, and we were on the French side. And we had a battle across that river, and we also de-mined the bridge; we took explosives off; we took explosives away, so they couldn't blow it, and this way – then when we got down enough, our trucks and tanks could cross on that bridge into Germany and pick up the fighting there and that's exactly what happened."

The video narrator notes that there were some "minor explosions" on the bridge and that in a matter of seconds, US tanks "rumbled over the bridge and knocked out German ack ack guns".

- a. Using Merriam-Webster dictionary [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>] define ack ack gun

Ack ack gun means _____

The narrator then notes that the Nazis were "building up their artillery" in order to destroy the bridge. He stated the an attempt to dive bomb the bridge by the *Luftwaffe* was stopped.

- b. Using Google Translate <https://translate.google.com/?hl=en&tab=TT> select German for the left box in order to translate to English in the right box. Enter *Luftwaffe*.

Luftwaffe means _____

He goes on to state that the bridge collapsed on March 17th. Despite the collapse, the last “natural barrier to the Allied Armies in the west has now been breached”. Based on the narrator’s quote and Mr. Wright’s interview entry above, what is the significance of having four US Divisions across the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen?

2. Mr. Wright stated that they were told they were going to liberate a Concentration Camp while he was in Erfurt. Using Google Maps <https://www.google.com/maps> enter Remagen, Germany into the search field. Then select the Directions arrow and enter Erfurt, Germany. Using miles and today’s roads, approximately how far is it from Remagen to Erfurt?

- a. It is approximately _____ miles from Remagen to Erfurt, Germany

Mr. Wright had been assigned to Patton’s 3rd Army, 80th Infantry Division which liberated Buchenwald Concentration Camp. He states in his interview that he was attached to the Infantry and walked into the camp. Examine this photo of US troops entering Buchenwald Concentration Camp <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/us-troops-enter-buchenwald> and then read the section of his interview below

Interviewer: So you walked into the camp, and what was the first impression you had of the camp? Can you describe the camp at all?

Mr. Wright: It was well built; it was nice buildings and – of brick or stone, which they had a lot of – and well – they were well built and well maintained. The camp was maintained, we were told, it was done by the President. They kept it that way, you know, under the German control.

Interviewer: Was it surrounded by a fence?

Mr. Wright: Yes.

Interviewer: Electric?

Mr. Wright: Yeah

- b. Based on the photograph and the section of his interview, were the soldiers prepared for what they found inside? _____

Read the follow up interview question about the camp appearance *after* Mr. Wright and other soldiers entered Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

“I thought when I walked in, I said, ‘oh my gosh! I hope we never have a thing like this! This is terrible!’ Because there was an air of sadness; there was an air of anger; an air of killing, you could feel it in there and you knew why you were there, because – to create death, and that’s what they did. They took people in there from all different foreign countries, especially military people, and put them to death through the gas chamber.”

Notice the difference between when Mr. Wright and the soldiers were *outside* the camp, and after entering it. How do you think Mr. Wright and the other soldiers reacted? _____

3. Mr. Wright was asked if he saw children at Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Examine this photo <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/photo/child-survivors-of-buchenwald> and then read the following section of his interview.

Interviewer: Did you see any children in the camp?

Mr. Wright: Yes, there were children there and you know, they were just like any kids, the way they walked around and looked around, but they looked like they were kind of beat down and not happy, cheerful like our children are. We weren’t very happy about that.

- a. How do you think Mr. Wright and the other soldiers felt upon seeing children at the camp?
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Block 66 was a secret section of Buchenwald set up by prisoners to *protect* children. Read the brief article from the Jewish Virtual Library <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/block-66-at-buchenwald>

- b. Approximately how many children and teenagers were liberated?
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Read this last section of Mr. Wright’s interview.

Interviewer: How did it affect you personally throughout your life?

Mr. Wright: The concentration camps?

Interviewer: Yeah, seeing the camps and that – how has it affected you personally?

Mr. Wright: To be thankful to God in heaven for what we have in this country and even though we have problems that face us, we handle them with – with the kind of care that should be and we do not dwell on the concentration camp idea. Yeah.

- c. Do you think other soldiers felt the same as Mr. Wright in being thankful for what they had and wanting to not “dwell on the concentration camp idea”? _____
