

"I Have Some Prisoners, I Have" Said Private Lenert and He Needed a Hall to Hold Them

(Stars and Stripes.)

This is the story of Private Frank Lenert, a sleepy-looking, flat-footed 19-year-old marine from Chicago who emerged from Belleau woods with 22 boches as his personal prisoners.

It happened on the night the Americans in that sector rounded out their possession of the woods, killing, capturing, or driving out the remaining German machine gun companies that had clung stubbornly to their final strip of defensible forest. It was a little after midnight, and the intelligence officer at one regimental headquarters had turned in with full pack on for an hour's sleep when he was awakened by the voice of a private calling out his name under his window. "The voice went on in what its owner fondly believed to be a stage whisper, but which was really a sort of muffled roar.

"Say, come on down; I got some prisoners, I have."

"Well," said the lieutenant, "stick them in a shed somewhere, and I'll be down and look them over."

Into the Moonlit Road.

"I guess I'll have to hire a hall," was the reply the lieutenant heard as he adjusted his helmet and gas mask, and he was chuckling at that bit of Yankee braggadocio as he tumbled down the stairs and out into the moonlit road. The road was crowded. The sleep vanished from his widening eyes as he gazed upon a German company, drawn up in full array, with a beaming marine on guard at either end, and Private Lenert standing attention, with his right hand fumbling the butt of a German captain's automatic.

Over his shoulder was slung an exceptionally fine pair of German field glasses. He had just tossed away a pleasantly flavored German cigarette. Everyone looked very happy, including the Germans.

"Where in the name of all that's wonderful did you get all these?"

"Oh," said Lenert cheerfully, "they just came along."

Later, when the prisoners had been marched off down the road to brigade headquarters, this account of the capture unfolded itself from the testimony of all concerned.

Lenert's battalion had been in the thick of the fighting, which had been preceded by a series of hotly contested advances, since a little after sundown. He himself, in the height of the excitement, had got astray from his company, and, confused in his bearings, he was looking for his own people again in the darkness of the woods when he stumbled into a German machine gun, and knew as much by the way they fell upon him.

The boches dragged their line prisoner before their captain, who put him through a hurried examination—an examination carried on in German, for Lenert can speak German. Lenert did not know much, but he

TEASIN' HIM



tried a few details on his inquisitor, this patch of woods and blow it to and noting the profound effect they had. I don't want to be here. I want to get out right now."

Heap Big Pow-wow

With this final piece of information to consider, the captain withdrew a little and held great pow-wow with his three lieutenants. The council of war did not last long, and very likely was the concluding session of one held a little earlier the morning of a plan already considered. A moment later and private Lenert was startled and a little embarrassed by the German captain's formal surrender to him. He took the proffered automatic, flourishing it several times, and squared his shoulders.

"Throw down your arms," he said boldly, and the soldiers, who were entirely in sympathy with the proceedings, discarded their weapons with alacrity. There were 78 of them.

Leading His Flock

"Come on, then," said the Marine, and in scandalous conversation of the approved methods, brandished his newly acquired pistol and led rather than drove his prisoners back. His sense of direction had been improved considerably by his study of the map and when he became confused once on the way back the captain proffered his compass, and they soon had their bearings again.

It was like that all the way through—an off-the-party, with the Germans doing much time every once in a while when they feared they might not get as thoroughly captured as they had decided by this time they wanted to be.

The first point they struck was the headquarters of another regiment, for Lenert did not know his own command had vacated their premises and moved on elsewhere. He got his new directions and started on.

"Need any guards?" they asked respectfully.

"Don't need any guards," he replied "but I'd like a couple of guides."

"I Got Some Prisoners."

As his staff was increased by two, and off down the road the strange procession moved. A little later and he was roasting his announcement.

"Say, come on down; I got some prisoners, I have."



They were patting Lenert on the back, not under any delusion that he had valiantly run down and captured single-handed 22 stubbornly resisting soldiers of the enemy, but he apparently was quick-witted enough to give the final fillip to their impulse to throw up their hands and because he had himself negotiated the surrender, was not last long, and very likely was the concluding session of one held a little earlier the morning of a plan already considered. A moment later and private Lenert was startled and a little embarrassed by the German captain's formal surrender to him. He took the proffered automatic, flourishing it several times, and squared his shoulders.

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"Any more?" Lenert asked.

The captain admitted there might be a few more, but they were slowed away in digouts and outposts, and would have to shift for themselves. There was nothing to lose.

"Need any guards?" they asked respectfully.

"Don't need any guards," he replied "but I'd like a couple of guides."

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