



the Heimatbrief

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Lt. Col. Hubert Rudofsky with two Lipizzan stallions at the breeding facility at Hostau

the Heimatbrief

Newsletter of the German-Bohemian
Heritage Society
PO Box 822
New Ulm, MN 56073-0822

**"The GBHS seeks to promote and maintain
the German-Bohemian culture and
heritage."**

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Phone: (507) 828-3282

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Contact Angie Portner for special arrangements at:
angiep@newulmtel.net, or 507-359-2121.

GBHS website:

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~gbhs/

Research contact: Bob Paulson - rpaulgb@comcast.net

German-Bohemian Heritage Society Newsletter

Editor: Wade Olsen
698 Bridle Ridge Road
Eagan, MN 55123 USA
Phone: (651) 260-9444
Email: Wade@wadesconnections.com

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New Ulm, MN 56073-0822 or email to:

Wade@wadesconnections.com

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An excerpt of Brigitte Peter's book entitled:

1945: Rettung der Lipizzaner, Wagnis oder Wunder?

"Rescue of the Lipizzaner Horses, Venture or Wonder"

Translated and condensed by Aida Kraus

It is April 1945, the little town of Hostau in the Bohemian Forest finds itself in "never land" so to speak, because the Russians from the East had not yet penetrated that far to the West, and the American Army was just arriving at the Bohemian-Bavarian Border. While World War II raged outside, this little island in the middle of chaos seemed to go on as ever, with people fulfilling their daily tasks.

Lt. Col. Hubert Rudofsky, a son of a prominent family from Bischofteinitz, was in charge of the Hostau military breeding station with 500 of the most valuable and precious horses known in the world as Lipizzaner. They were stabled and cared for in this last peaceful corner of a collapsing world. The breeding facilities in the Hostau area had been in existence since 1915 with grazing rights on 460 hectares (about 920 acres) belonging to the Duke of Trauttmansdorff. In the beginning, this land was leased by the k&k (Kaiser und Koenigliche Monarchy) Ministry of Agriculture in order to house the royal steeds which then were arriving from Bukovina when it was run over by the Russians during WWI. At the end of the war (1918), all Bohemian lands became property of the newly formed Czechoslovakia. Before the war, Bohemia was Austrian land. The

newly formed Czechoslovakia took away 360 hectares from the horse breeding facilities and converted it for agricultural purposes, therefore, only 100 hectares remained for grazing. In fall of 1938, as the facility was further diminished, the entire breed was transferred to Horni Motesice in Slovakia, where a sister facility was in operation since 1927. Gradually all horse breeding facilities were severely neglected and valuable horses were lost. In 1938, with the German occupation, there was a new awareness and need for horses for the German Cavalry, and the Hostau breeding facility was reestablished. Horses were brought from East Prussia, Hannover, Holstein, Oldenburg and Ostfriesland for breeding and it became a very successful operation.

At the end of WWII, the facility was crowded because Duke Amassow came from Poland with a troop of Cossacks. He was seeking shelter from the Russians and had brought with them 60 brood mares, 4 stallions, and 80 Anglo-Don mares plus a small herd of about 30 Polish ponies. All of the sudden nearly

200 more horses were added to the resident 500 horses, and now there was even more need for food, room to graze and all the requirements for grooming and stabling. It was a monumental task.

The staff of the breeding facility was headed by Lt. Col. Hubert Rudofsky, and Staff Veterinarian Dr. Lessing. There was an accountant, a farmer, a blacksmith, saddlers and several soldiers, all running on a familiar and smooth daily schedule. It became a rather crowded situation with the sudden arrival of Duke Amassow with his staff including Colonel Beckmann, Veterinarian Dr. Kroll and a large contingent of horse groomers from the East. The crowding not only affected the breeding facility, but also the surrounding villages.



Lt. Col. Hubert Rudofsky

Refugees from Silesia were arriving in horse drawn carriages with old, wounded and infirm people. There were bands of people carrying or carting their few belongings towards the American lines. All of them were totally exhausted from their long trek. Shelters were provided at schools, churches and among the populace for these hapless people.

Dr. Rudolf Lessing, whose main work was at the breeding facility, had twice as much work to do now, because he had to absorb the tasks of the local veterinarian who had been drafted into the military, and now additional needs were created by the influx of these refugees. There were horses that had lost shoes, some had raw sores from the scouring of harnesses; man and beast were by now skeletal from hunger and total exhaustion. In addition, the refugees from the eastern concentration camps who had been set free were an additional sorry looking group of people, looking ill, weak with bones showing through their rags and in desperate need for care. It was visible that they were tired, discouraged, hungry, wounded, dirty and ragged. They were just hanging on to life with their last bit of fortitude. Suddenly, the relatively quiet life at the breeding facility was over.

A new reality made inroads that the war was lost. And then, it became known that the border between Bohemia and Bavaria was closed and the victorious armies were squeezing from the East and West, trapping this listless group of people into a small strip of land along the border. The last escape, was barred by the German army forced to make a last stand with the Volkssturm (a group of old men sworn to defend the country to the last man, plus teenage boys of the HJ or Hitler Youth). They were urged on, by Nazi leaders, who forced them to build tank barriers across the roads. This was also blocking the last possible escape. Lt. Col. Rudofsky hitched

horses to a carriage to "inspect" the roadwork discouraging the group from blocking traffic.

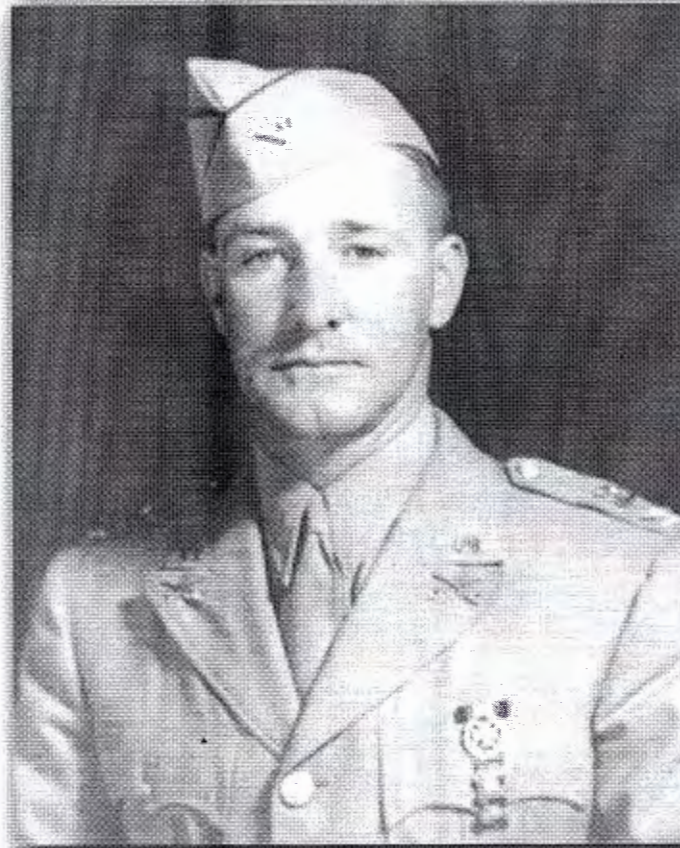
When desperation was greatest, an unknown Colonel of the Luftwaffe named Walter H. appeared at Lt. Col. Rudofsky's office. His last name was never revealed and it is not legible on a letter he wrote to Rudofsky. He arrived at the breeding station with the request to view the facility. All that was known of him was that he was a commanding officer in the Luftwaffe (Air Force) and in charge of a meteorological station near Hostau. The Luftwaffe no longer existed and Col Walter H. and his team were without orders. The man was quite obviously a horse lover who was highly impressed by the breed; to him it was clear, that the destruction of the facility would mean the loss of irreplaceable horses of four prominent horse breeds. Among them were 350 pure Lipizzaner, the most famous horse breed in Europe and now it might

require a miracle to save these horses.

In the meantime nobody was given any information as to the political situation and because no news would penetrate from official channels, most people resorted to listening to English and American Radio, although this was strictly forbidden.

Every member of the German Army had to reconcile himself to the fact that he would eventually become a prisoner of war. Col. Walter H. was not willing to wait for this to happen and made plans to become a prisoner of the Americans. As a commanding officer he was invited by American Col.

Reed to a breakfast interview and as horse lovers they got along splendidly. The German Luftwaffe Colonel Walter H. informed American Col. Reed of the breeding facility at Hostau and showed him photos of the Lipizzaner. It was an utterly tempting offer to rescue 350 Lipizzaner horses, besides a large amount of Arabians, and other exquisite full blooded breeds



Col. Charles H. Reed

who were housed only a few miles away across the border. A plan was worked out to rescue these horses. The problem was that Col. Reed was under command to wait at the Bavarian-Bohemian Border until the Russians had occupied the Bohemian area, but this placed those valuable animals into the hands of the Russians. Col. Reed's very words were: "We mutually agreed that these fine animals should not fall into Communist hands" and he immediately contacted Headquarters of the 3rd Army. In a radio-telephone conversation with General George S. Patton he explained the very time sensitive importance in rescuing these valuable horses, and he was given permission to proceed in getting them across the border post haste. Patton's comment was: "Get them, make it fast, you have a new mission!" Col. Reed sent a "middleman" to Lt. Col. Rudofsky carrying a handwritten note from Luftwaffe Col. Walter H. with information on negotiations. Here is the handwritten note:

TRANSLATION:

Walddorf (without a date, but most probably April 25, 1945) most esteemed Mr. Rudofsky! I am sending you this letter requesting that you send one of your authorized officers to me in order to start proceedings in transferring all horses to Bavaria using the fastest roads across the border. It would be most regrettable if these fine horses were to fall into Bolshevik hands. I found a possibility to get you and the horses through the border guards. We must handle very quickly. Nobody but you should be informed of this, so this task may not falter. The best way would be if one of your officers could visit the mayor of Ploess, at Weissensulz House No. 3. One of my own officers will meet your man with more detailed information. With best regard, (signed)....Your Walter H (last name not legible) Colonel.

A German forestry official was dispatched on a bicycle and arrived April 26, 1945 at 13:30 at Lt. Col

Walddorf
Sehr geehrter Herr Rudofsky!
Ich sende Ihnen diese Zeilen
mit der Bitte um sofortige
Anweisung eines Offiziers, um die
Horse zu retten, um die Überführung
der Pferde nach Bayern auf dem
schnellsten Wege zu besorgen.
Es wäre im Interesse, wenn diese im-
maligen Tiere in die Hände der
Bolschewisten fallen. Ich habe die
Möglichkeit, Sie und die Pferde sicher
durch die Grenze zu schleusen. Es ist
aber höchste Zeit. Es darf
niemand etwas außer Ihnen erfahren,
da sonst sofort Verhaftung droht. Am
besten fährt der Offizier nach Ploß
und ruft dort beim Bürgermeister
Weissensulz #3 an. Er wird sich
dann einen meiner Offiziere melden
der weitere Anweisungen hat.
Mit besten Grüßen
Walter H.

Rudofsky's office handing him this letter. Lt. Col Rudofsky replied: "Except for just a few German soldiers here, I have only some groomers from Yugoslavia, Poland, France and Belgium. If they are involved in the drive across the border, they will run away. How am I going to achieve this drive with insufficient personnel? Do not forget that there are stallions needing to be led, and what about the mares who have just foaled and the others are carrying? It is almost impossible to set the horses on this long march from today to tomorrow, and besides I am under order to remain at the breeding facility." That letter seemed never to have arrived.

THE COUNT DOWN OF A MIRACLE

At 14:00 hours, Staff Veterinarian Dr. Lessing, with a groom in tow, followed the bicycle rider back in the direction of Ploess. After 1 ½ hours they stopped at a forestry lodge far away from all dwellings. There Dr. Lessing was informed that Col. Walter H. was no longer at Weissensulz, as was expected, but was already in custody of the American Army. Dr. Lessing had been ordered, by his commanding officer Lt. Col. Rudofsky, to make contact with nobody else but the writer of the message. Now Dr. Lessing has to make a quick decision: He either had to follow orders and return, or accept the forester's proposal that he would guide him to meet with Col. Reed. There was no question to ponder and they waited until it was dark, before they traveled closer to the border. Suddenly a "hands up" was shouted and two American soldiers with automatic weapons were approaching the little group. At first Dr. Lessing thought that everything was lost, but knew that he had to think quickly. It was his luck that he spoke English fluently and explained that he was sent by Lt. Col. Rudofsky to meet with Col. Reed. And it became clear, that the guards had been primed and were satisfied with the explanation. The forester was sent back and Dr. Lessing was asked to accompany the American soldiers through the forest where a jeep waited on a logging road. They drove

about 12 miles to where Col. Reed was stationed and by then it was nearly 19:00 and quite dark. Dr. Lessing met Col. Reed at a large farmhouse; also present were Capt. Morgentau – the son of the Secretary of the Treasury – Major Shishar and Captain Stewart, as well as other officers. Dr. Lessing recalls with great relief that Col. Reed welcomed him politely. The entire atmosphere at this meeting was direct and with understanding. Dr. Lessing expressed later, that at the time he did not feel that he actually had stood before an "enemy" and, basically, he thought only of the welfare of the horses for which he had cared so intimately for many years. He was unclear if he had proceeded correctly in meeting with Col. Reed instead of following the formal chain of command, which was to meet with Col. Walter H. who, however, was no

longer at Ploess. It became all too clear, that this meeting enabled a rescue of their breeding horses and decisions had to be made without official orders on either side. It was up to Dr. Lessing now to present the difficulties in driving the horses from their facility across the border and suggested that the US Army assist in the transfer. He assured the Americans that the breeding facility was practically without weapons and that they would not shoot at the American forces if they helped to rescue the horses. Col. Reed replied that he had orders not to cross the



Staff-Veterinarian Dr. Rudolf Lessing on his purebred stallion Indigo.

border, and explained that he was forced by the agreement at Yalta to wait for the Russian army to arrive on the other side. This was the first time that Dr. Lessing heard about an agreement made at Yalta and after that the table became silent and sad. But Dr. Lessing was more determined than ever to bring "his" horses to safety. Recordings from the US side stated that "Dr. Lessing was eloquent in his plea to the Americans to rescue the horses" (source: M.J. Parkinson).

Unknown to the group's meeting with Dr. Lessing, there were new developments at the breeding facility. Lt. Col. Rudofsky's office was literally taken over by General Schulze who was put in charge to defend the

area around Hostau, which happened immediately after Dr. Lessing had left that morning. It became evident to Lt. Col Rudofsky that General Schulze's encouragement to the Volkssturm and those young and eager teenagers to defend the area posed tremendous dangers bordering on self-destruction. Worse yet, General Schulze outranked Lt. Col. Rudofsky, who was now unable to make any decisions on his own. Military protocol required him to take orders from the higher ranking General. He was asked the whereabouts of the Veterinarian Officers on Rudofsky's team, and Lt. Col. Rudofsky stalled, explaining that they were working in other areas at present. He believed that Dr. Lessing was meeting with the German Luftwaffe Officer at the mayor's house at Weissensulz at that time; but he had no idea that Dr. Lessing actually was in contact with Col. Reed of the US Army. The relationship between Dr. Lessing and Lt. Col. Rudofsky had been solid for many years.

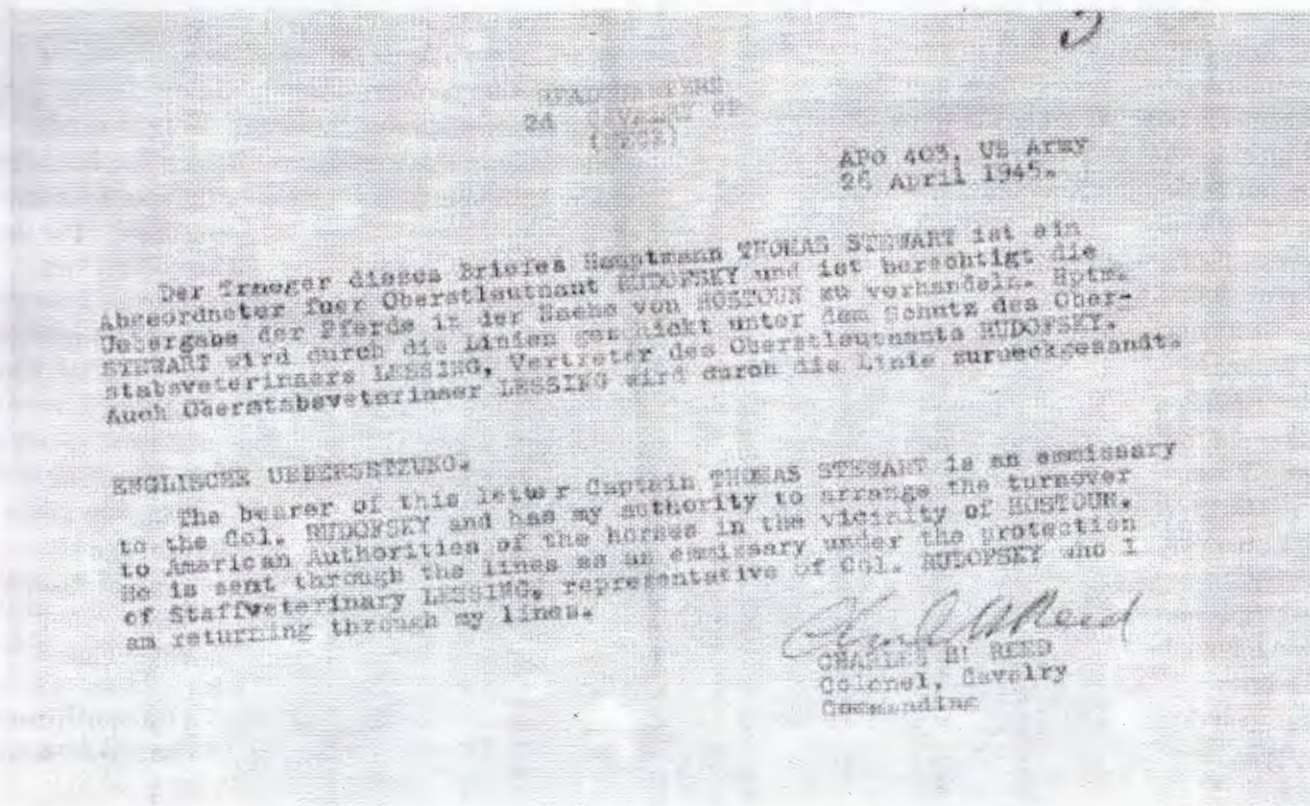
Also missing was Dr. Wolfgang Kroll, who was a recent arrival with the Polish contingent under Duke Amassow, he worked not only for the breeding station but by sheer necessity he also shared Dr. Lessing's work.

Rudofsky explained to the General that all veterinarians were presently working in the field or might be doctoring the animals belonging to the

farmers and refugees. It was a very stressful situation and not without serious consequences.

The General was getting more agitated by the hour until he shouted at Lt. Col Rudofsky that he was not at all satisfied with his answers. To make matters worse, the General started his own investigations. As feared, someone had spilled that Dr. Lessing had departed to Bavaria.... which put General Schulze into a rage. He shouted at Lt. Col. Rudofsky that he must realize that he had enough reason here to have him executed. The situation was becoming highly dangerous. The date was April 26th, and the war was not yet over.

Lt. Col. Rudofsky was frantic with worries about his two missing veterinarians. Dr. Lessing, in the meantime, was arranging the transfer and survival of the horses with Col. Reed. The latter was very knowledgeable and realized with sudden clarity that Dr. Lessing's plea for assistance was correct, and without help the horses could not be driven across the border. Besides he was quite obviously eager to get these horses into US custody. Col. Reed also realized that time was of essence, as the Russian Army was approaching Pilsen already. There was no other way to rescue the horses except to march on Hostau immediately in order to get there before the Russians. Let's forget Yalta, let's not mention it now or later, and even in Reed's personal report about the "The Rescue of the Lipizzaner" it was never brought up.



Col. Reed's adjutant was Captain Thomas M. Stewart, who was a very fine horseman and son of a Senator from Tennessee. He volunteered to ride back with Dr. Lessing to Hostau. The most important point in their dealings was that the US Army was assured that no military conflict was to be expected at Hostau. Dr. Lessing cautioned Col. Reed that between the American camp and Hostau was the station of a SS-Unit that could create some problems, but Reed discounted this in his own report: "That bothered us very little, as we planned a quiet day or so, and then a great attack to overrun them." Besides he was assured of his strategic advantage, and Capt. Stewart got under way with Dr. Lessing toward Hostau.

Dr. Lessing writes about what happened next: "In the meantime it was 10:00 pm and we drove back to the forest in the Jeep. I got on my purebred, and Capt. Stewart used the horse of my groom. At night the ride was much longer and we arrived at Hostau after midnight. Capt. Stewart did not wear riding boots and did not have a firm grip on the stirrups, besides, he was not used to English saddles and negotiating a rather steep hill in the dark, he catapulted over the head of his horse, but luckily he was not injured." Dr. Lessing felt extremely tired by then, it was a full day, and they had negotiated two border crossings. His responsibility for the life of Capt. Stewart weighed heavily on him.

The news was not good at all, when they arrived at Hostau. Rudofsky told him that a General had taken over the military defense of Hostau and things were out of his hands now. "What General?" asked Lessing. He had no idea what had transpired during his absence, but neither did Rudofsky know that Dr. Lessing had actually made contact with the US army instead with the German Officer Walter H. Now they were in a fine pickle! In the meantime Stewart waited in Dr. Lessing's quarters. When Lessing returned with the depressing news, he appraised the American that there was an arrival of a general who

intended to defend Hostau. This collapsed all promises he had made to Col. Reed. There was no rest for Dr. Lessing as yet. He bravely followed his orders to see the General.

He was met with fury and very serious accusations when the General realized that Dr. Lessing had brought an American across the border to negotiate rescue for the horses. What worried Dr. Lessing most, was that the American Capt. Stewart now became a hostage. The shouting match between the General and Dr. Lessing was vicious. The latter knew that he was at a point where he had nothing more to lose. He realized that the General had the power to shoot the entire staff of the breeding station for insubordination, but as tired and exhausted as he was from this trying day, he placed his life on the line for the horses in a "devil may care attitude". He shouted back at the General that a man in his position should be intelligent enough to see for himself that the war would be over within days and that the hungry Russian fighting rabble would make horse meat of these valuable horses. Instead of becoming more enraged, the General suddenly calmed down and said "I cannot release the American without permission from the Corps Commander." That person had his headquarters at the castle (monastery) of Kladrau, and although Dr. Lessing would be the go-between, it would not leave enough time to return Capt. Stewart, provided that they would even get permission. Lessing made sure that it was understood that he had promised Col. Reed the return of Capt. Stewart on the next day at noon and that it was of immediate concern to inform Col. Reed of Capt. Stewart's whereabouts. Although the Commander would not give any written order to Schulze, he called him by Radio phone and agreed to the transfer some

time later. For the time being, they came to an agreement that they would send Dr. Kroll over to the Americans immediately in exchange for Capt. Stewart and also to inform Col. Reed of recent new developments.

**(To be continued
in the June Issue.)**



Hostau approx. 1930 - Lipizzaner Facilities on edge of town

**An excerpt of Brigitte Peter's
book entitled:**

1945: Rettung der Lipizzaner, Wagnis oder Wunder?

**"Rescue of the Lipizzaner Horses,
Venture or Wonder"**

**Translated and condensed by Aida
Kraus**

Previously, in the March issue, the American Army was in the process of setting up the rescue and transfer of the the famous Lipizzaner Horses from horse breeding facilities in and near the village of Hostau in western Czechoslovakia. Everything was progressing well, when a German General named Schultz took over the facility and would not release American Captain Stewart from the facility and threatened to defend the site. The German veterinarian, Dr. Kroll, was sent to the Americans on the Bavarian side of the border in exchange for Capt. Stewart. And Dr. Kroll needed to inform the Americans of recent developments....

Dr. Kroll was primed with what he could expect at the border, and that the Americans would meet him with "hands up". They said goodbye at the forest lodge, and Dr. Kroll walked towards the border in his German uniform; he was a member of the German 5 Cavalry Regiment and they display a small emblem on their uniform, a little skull. Because of this Dr. Kroll was mistaken for an SS man. "He is SS, let's kill him!" is what he heard the American guardsmen say, as they approached him. But Dr. Kroll, fluent in English, was not intimidated and explained his mission to the guards and that he was an emissary to meet with Col. Reed. When he was brought to Reed, he had to report the unexpected developments in Hostau. He

found Col. Reed very agreeable that Dr. Kroll would be the guarantee for the return of Capt. Stewart.

In the meantime Lessing was fighting for some sort of agreement to return Capt. Stewart to his unit. The commander certainly would not issue any order in writing by passing the buck to General Schulze. A phone call from Headquarters must have influenced the General to release the American and that there would be no shooting at the arriving Americans. Dr. Lessing had to get on the way to the border once more, and this time with Capt. Stewart in the seat of his motorcycle side car. In order to protect Capt. Stewart's American identity, they wrapped him in a tarp and put on German headgear. When Capt. Stewart got out of the sidecar at the forest lodge, his identity was revealed and four armed men appeared from behind the lodge. Dr. Lessing said that he recognized them as residents of Hostau who were led by the pharmacist Herr Just, the local leader of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) and who was ready to shoot Dr. Lessing and Capt. Stewart. Dr. Lessing spoke authoritatively to the group and handed them the permit signed by Major General Schulze.

(See Orders on next page)

The Nazi troublemakers grudgingly put away their weapons. Capt. Stewart took leave and continued on his way to Bavaria while Dr. Lessing waited for Dr. Kroll to ride back with him to Hostau. Dead tired by then and without sleep for many hours, he had a long time to wait. But when Dr. Kroll did not show, he took one of the horses and returned alone. On the ride to Hostau he stopped at a client, Baron Kotz von Dobirsch, who saw that his visitor was totally exhausted. He made him eat and rest during which time a phone call alerted them that 20 American tanks were crossing the border.

On the morning of April 28, 1945, during Dr. Lessing's return to Hostau, we have a recording of Lt. Col. Rudofsky stating that the group who had come with General Schulze was packing up to leave, and when he wanted to see him off he was already gone. The General was never heard of or seen again.

5

An Herrn Oberstleutnant T r o s t .

Stabsveterinär Lessing hat den Auftrag ,den amerikanischen Offi-
zier wieder durch die Linien zu bringen und mit dem Stabsveteri-
Kroll zu Pferde wieder zurückzukehren.



Generalmajor

Translation: To Lt. Col. Trost: Staff Veterinarian Lessing is ordered to return the American Officer across the border and to return with Staff Veterinarian Kroll on horseback. Signed: Major General Schulze.

This gave Lt. Col. Rudofsky an opportunity to give orders to all residents of the area to put up white flags. He was also instrumental to caution the populace not to show any kind of resistance to the approaching Americans.

Col. Reed on the American side reported that they formed a small combat unit from the 41st Detachment and that they moved out with Company A, parts of Company C, a tank platoon from Company F, and an assault gunnery platoon from Company F, all under the command of Major Robert P. Andrews, with Capt. Stewart as second in command. At 10:00 am they departed Headquarters and advanced on Hostau. Their task was to occupy the breeding facility under the command of Lieutenant William D. Quinlivan with 28 soldiers and one unit of light tanks. The Americans were not sure what would await them on the way to Hostau. However, through the first two villages they did not encounter any resistance and not one shot was exchanged. When they came across the

hill, they could see Hostau in the valley, and about a mile from the village they could see the pastures, the buildings of the stables, and German military horse-drawn carts moving in the opposite direction. The American side reports: "We still did not know what to expect and that is why I gave the order to fire two shots above the village." Reed reports that there were no casualties on the American side, but that there was damage to a few houses on the other side of the hill beyond Hostau, and there were some deaths and wounded.

Lt. Col. Rudofsky reports: "We saw the tanks coming over the hillside and heard the shots. Perhaps they fired a warning, or they wanted to know if they would get a reply to their fire. Everybody remained calm, and these were the first and last shots fired. As far as we were concerned, this now was the end of the war. The Americans did not arrive along Main Street, but through a field coming from the northwest from the direction of Heiligenkreuz. We displayed a white sheet on the tower and

we held another between us (Dr. Lessing and I) as we walked towards the tanks.

Hostau fell without any engagement and the only casualties suffered were supposedly on the German side. Reed reports: "Marching into Hostau did not feel like a capture, but rather a welcome. There were people lining the streets, a group of freed prisoners of war mixed with the general populace, all paying us welcome." German soldiers turned in their weapons, the American flag was hoisted, and Reed reports verbatim: "After placing outposts, the officers, intelligence personnel, and as many soldiers as could be spared went to look at the array of those (famous) captured horses."

Rudofsky reports about Reed's noble generosity: "A Jeep arrived at the station and Col. Reed who sat

in front with the driver jumped out and offered me his seat. He seated himself in the back on top of a munition box. And now we visited each individual village explaining our work there."

There were three villages that were housing the additional horses that had come with Duke

Amassow. They were stabled at

Hassatitz, Zwirschen and Taschlowitz. After a short appraisal Reed decided that only two of these areas should be occupied besides Hostau. Taschlowitz seemed to be too far to the East and in reach of the Russians at Pilsen, so it was obvious that he wanted to avoid contact with them. It was important to evacuate the horses as quickly as possible. He told Rudofsky to inventory everything in preparation of the transfer, including not only the horses, but the entire movable paraphernalia, the entire horse pharmacy, as

well as fodder. When Rudofsky asked him what should happen to the horses that had arrived from Russian facilities with Duke Amassow, he said that they would remain, but that Rudofsky would be in charge of taking the horse convoy to Bavaria. Rudofsky said, "I reflected for a moment of what was asked of me but replied: 'Colonel, I am a German-Bohemian, this is my homeland. I have land holdings, only 17 km from here, and I have a mother living there who is very ill. If it would not be required, I would prefer to remain here.' Reed replied, 'Oh no, you are coming with us.' And he went even a step further 'because first you will be accompanying the convoy and then you will take the horses to America!'" Suddenly Rudofsky became alert and thought: Does he plan that America will be the final destination for our Hostauer

horses? With a lot of control he let this remark pass knowing that a very generous offer was made to him. He requested that after the horses were handed over, to remain in his homeland. Reed replied, "Ok, then you may stay at your post."



Col. Reed and his staff at the Lipizzan breeding station at Hostau

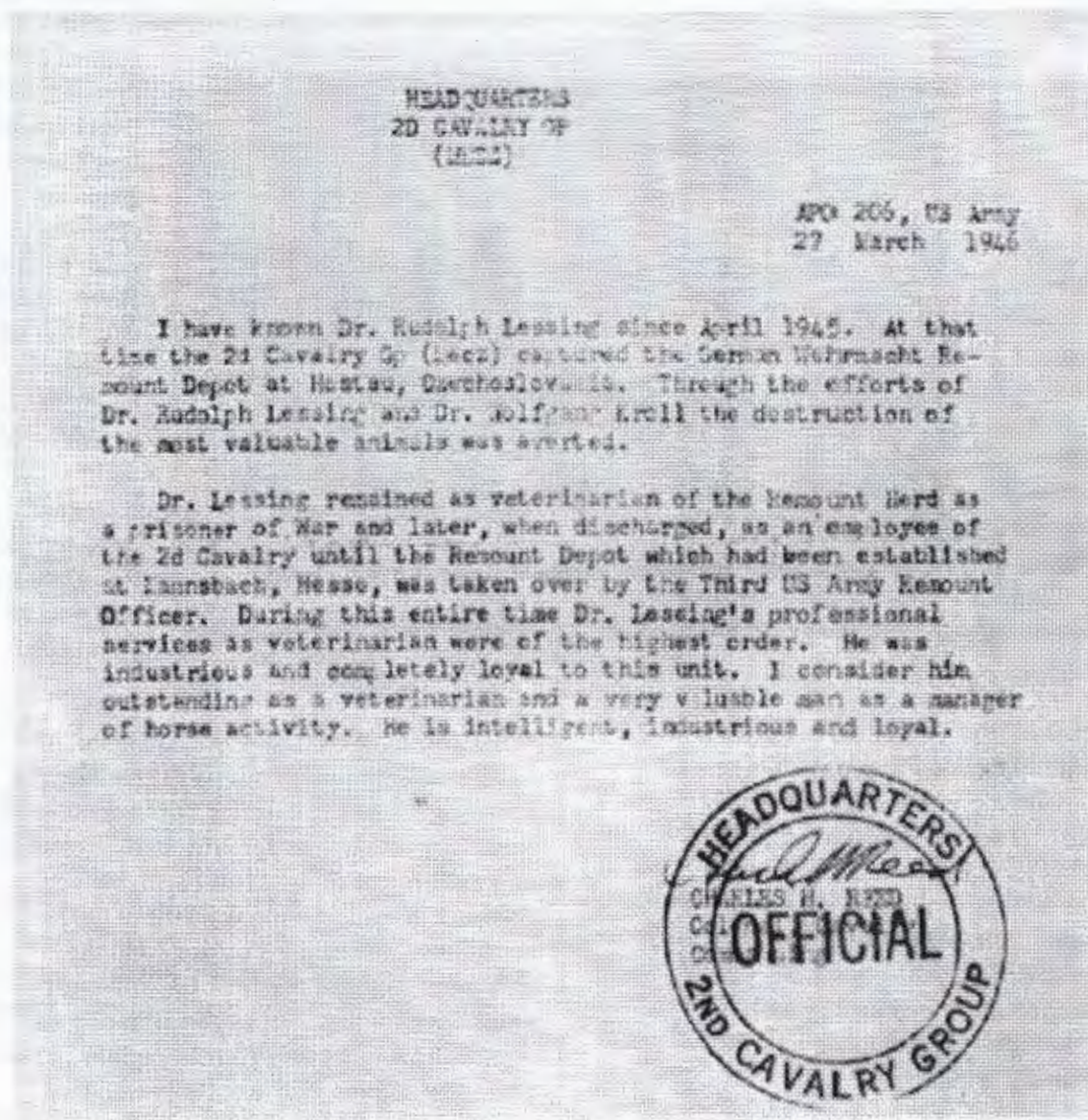
Thirty

American soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Bill Quinlivan were guarding the breeding station still under the leadership of Rudofsky. He was to remain there as civilian and as Director of the Stud Farm, not as a prisoner of war. People working at the facility were those remaining Cossacks and the prisoners they had made of the Volkssturm and Hitler youths. But in the following days it was difficult to retain order, especially in the outlying stables, because those who had served as prisoners of war under the Germans

were now in a reverse position and tried to get even with those individuals against whom they had grievances and they would certainly not do physical work anymore. Luckily, Quinlivan was a no-nonsense man and curbed any kind of aggression with force. Dr. Lessing voiced that "we knew that we were safe as long as the Americans were protecting us. But we were worried that the Russians could appear at any moment, and that was a very disturbing thought." In the meantime 9 days had passed and the war was over. Colonel Reed found it a somewhat questionable military situation. He was victor over the vanquished Germans whom he protected against his country's allies, the Russians. On May 7, 1945 the front line ran just 10 miles south-east of Pilsen, at Horsice – Zinkovy – Nepomuk in Czechoslovakia, and

now the Americans blocked the advance of the Russians.

It became evident that the situation could not be sustained and the drive had to get immediately on the way. Col. Reed got in touch with General Patton's Headquarters to secure transfer of the horses to Schwarzenberg in Bavaria, well out of reach of the Russians. He got permission to clear all streets for the drive and Dr. Wolfgang Kroll had been assigned to a group of Americans in finding accommodations for about 500 horses on the Bavarian side. The task was tedious because at the time the Bavarian farmers could only accommodate 2-5 horses in their stables and it needed many farms to house the herd. Here is a letter from Headquarters by Col. Charles H. Reed about the work of the two veterinarians.



The veterinarians were quickly attached to the care of the horses. Later on, Dr. Kroll would emigrate to America.

To prepare for the 40 km

(approximately 25 miles) drive of the herd to Bavaria, they formed groups of 30-80 horses. Mares that were carrying or with very small foals were loaded onto trucks, but there were many small 4 week old foals at their mother's side who actually completed

the distance. Col. Reed's report stated that the drive began on May 12, 1945, but in reality, and due to various difficulties, the drive began May 15. There is also a note from Rudofsky, "While Col. Reed had decided that the Russian horses should be left at Hostau, I realized that more driving horses were needed and I asked Duke Amassow to select additional horses for assistance in the drive, seeing that the convoy

was short of trained personnel." Duke Amassow saw this as an extremely lucky break for himself and his Cossacks to escape the

Russians, and he was very generous in selecting the best of his horses and many of his people to flee with the convoy. His Cossacks were all good horsemen and extremely helpful with difficult stallions. The next report is from Dr. Lessing that the herd got under way with the horses sorted into several groups: mares,

young stallions, young mares, mothers with small foals that were able to remain at their side and the stallions were placed at the end. They were accompanied by carriages transporting all implements from the breeding station and the refugees' carriages attached themselves to the convoy. Refugees on foot were trying to find a place in the wagons as



Horse Farm at Hostau WWII



Horse Breeding Facilities in Hostau

word got around that the Americans would be leaving for Bavaria.

Dr. Lessing:
“It was not our decision to either permit or deny the refugee’s desperate requests to join the convoy. However, Col. Reed showed extreme kindness and noble understanding. When we presented the situation to him he said ‘You know that I do not have any authority allowing refugees or civilians to attach themselves to us, but if they could be considered personnel of the breeding station or helpers in the drive, I would have no objection.’”

We have a report that the drive went extremely well thanks to the excellent organization on the part of the Americans, except for an incident at the Bohemian-Bavarian Border shortly before reaching Furth im Wald. The border gate was closed and a group of heavily armed Czech partisans barred the road and stopped the convoy. The situation became critical when they pulled a rider from his horse

and got ready to whip him. Just at that

moment Lt. Quinlivan arrived and asked what “the hell is going on here” and was told that the partisans would not let the convoy pass. Quinlivan shouted at the partisans with fury. In the meantime the convoy was backing up and some of

the horses became unruly. The group of the young stallions was hard to control and several broke away. There was chaos among the other horses. Quinlivan acted quickly calling up a

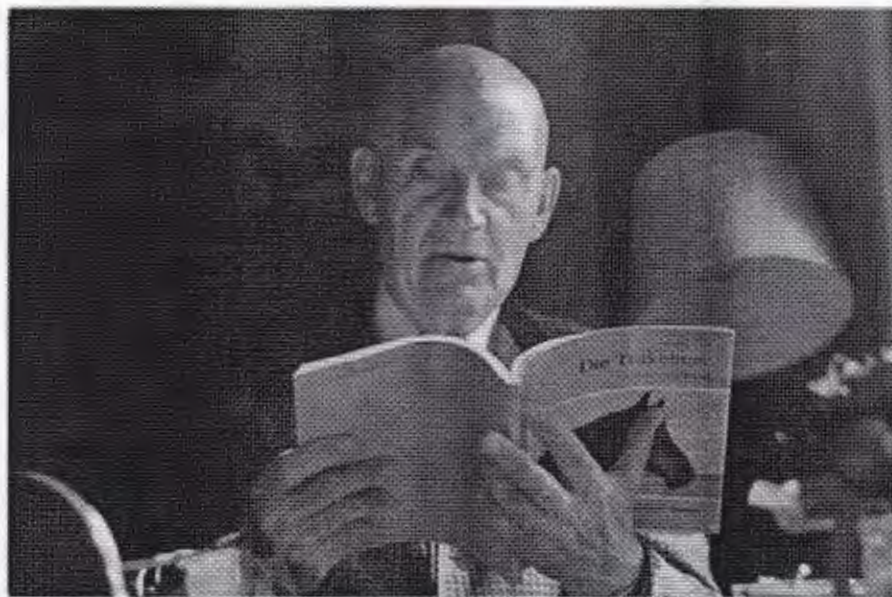
tank and had their cannon trained on the border guard’s house. He asked one of the Cossacks to make the Czechs understand that he would count to three and blow away the barrier and the border guard’s

house. He did not have to start counting.

The gate was opened quickly and the relief to all participants of this convoy could hardly be described.



Operation Cowboy



Hubert Rudofsky Studying Horses in 1980’s

A report exists from Rudofsky, that on the next day several young stallions and four mares had come back to their old places in the stables and a few others escaping the convoy were grazing in the fields.

They were caught by the farmers and returned. The Americans showed up the next day to pick up the recaptured animals and took them along also. Seeing the empty stables there was a moment of grief in Rudofsky's heart. No longer did he hear the usual animals noises... they were gone forever... there was only a vast emptiness.

Just as he left the stables, two Czech policemen came towards him and took him

into custody. Would he be made responsible for all that had happened here? Col. Reed paid him the respect which one officer has for the other. He had offered him to come with him on the drive and then to America, but Lt. Col. Rudofsky was a son of his homeland and stood firmly on the soil of his ancestors. Having remained behind, like a captain whose ship was sinking, he saw only to the rescue of those valuable horses. Questions filled his head with what will happen now. Will he be made the sole loser? Indeed, he was incarcerated, he lost his freedom, he lost his home and all his possessions, but worst of all, he lost his homeland forever.



Award Ceremony Vienna 1985 - Hubert Rudofsky recognized for his action in the Rescue of the Lippizzaner Horses. Front row on left seated is an American Officer representing the U.S., Dr. Lessing and center seated is Hubert Rudofsky among many other diplomats.