

How a Holy Night Brought Peace, Healing to These World War II Opponents

Editor's Note: This is part two of a two-part article. Read part one [here](#).

She then went inside and shut the door and informed the American soldiers that they had guests but that they would not be harmed. She explained that there were German soldiers who likewise needed help and that they would come inside for supper and stay the night. She then asked for their weapons, and they agreed. She took the American soldiers' weapons outside and leaned them against the cabin with the German soldiers' weapons. Then she invited the German soldiers to come inside.

So there they were. The German soldiers were on one side of the living room and the American soldiers on the other side, facing the opposing side while Mrs. Vincken prepared Christmas Eve supper. The silence was apparent. Out of the silence emerged the voices of the German soldiers singing the German hymn "Silent Night" in Latin. "Silent Night" was renowned in both German and Latin. Also, the Lutheran denomination in those days held mass in Latin. So German Lutherans often sang in Latin. Then their American brothers in Christ joined in, singing in English. Tears came down the faces of the German and American soldiers as they sang "Silent Night."

The German soldiers brought out of their supplies a flask of wine and a loaf of bread. They shared their wine and bread with the American soldiers. With tears running down their faces, they had Communion. Then one of the German soldiers began speaking in perfect English to the American soldiers and said he was a medical student. He offered to operate on the

wounded American soldier.

For several hours this German soldier operated with no anesthesia. It was such a meticulous and intense operation that his forehead was perspiring. Finally, he got the bullet out and bandaged up the wounded American soldier. He said the cold weather prevented infection from spreading. Mrs. Vincken had finished preparing the Christmas Eve supper. She invited them to the table and prayed, "Komm, Herr Jesus, and be our guest." They had Christian fellowship that holy night.

According to Fritz Vincken, in an interview in later years, "There were tears in her eyes, and as I looked around the table, I saw that the battle-weary soldiers were filled with emotion. Their thoughts seemed to be many, many miles away. Now they were boys again, some from America, some from Germany, all far from home."

In the morning, Mrs. Vincken gave them back their weapons and said she would pray for their safety. The German corporal showed the Americans on their own map how to get back behind American lines and gave them his compass. The German soldiers and the American soldiers all shook hands and went in opposite directions. Fritz later recounted, "She asked them to be very careful and told them, 'I hope someday you will return home safely to where you belong. May God bless and watch over you.'"

In 1965, Mrs. Vincken died. Mr. Vincken had likewise died in the 1960s. Their son, Fritz Vincken, and his wife moved to Hawaii, and he opened up Fritz's European Bakery in Kapalama, a neighborhood in Honolulu. For years he told the story of what happen that solemn Christmas Eve.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan, 40th president of the United States, had heard the story and retold it during a visit to Germany, saying, "The story needs to be told and retold because none of us can ever hear too much about building peace

and reconciliation.” The story caught on like wildfire.

In March 1995, *Unsolved Mysteries* dramatized the event and put it on national television. The American soldier who had been shot was Ralph Blank. He had served with the 121st Infantry, 8th Division, during World War II. Ralph was residing at Northampton Manor Nursing Home in Frederick, Maryland. He had been telling the story, just as Fritz had been, for decades. But when he saw it on *Unsolved Mysteries*, he went public with the story.

Fritz flew to Frederick, Maryland, to be reunited with Ralph Blank. When Ralph saw Fritz again, he said, “Your mother saved my life.” Fritz was pleased that his mother had received credit for saving the lives of seven American and German soldiers. Ralph told Fritz where one of the other American soldiers was located. So Fritz went to see him as well. None of the German soldiers came public with their stories. It could be that none of them were still alive; they may have been killed during the war.

Fritz died on Dec. 8, 2002. But the historical account of peace through Christ on that legendary holy night—Christmas Eve, 1944—remains as a testimony of the peace that passes understanding, which only comes from an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul the apostle said, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will protect your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

The power of the cross of Christ brings peace through Christ no matter what your circumstance may be. {eoa}

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