

VFW Post 12043 --- Maricopa, Arizona



NEWSLETTER

www.vfw12043.org

Date: January 2025 – A World War II story from - veteransinformation.quora.com
Was German General Walther Wenck a hero for his actions during the Battle of Berlin?

Yes – depending on how you define “hero”. Walther Wenck, the “Boy General”.

He knew the war was over; he had no way of relieving Berlin with his makeshift 12th Army. When he was stopped dead by the Russians about 12 miles from Berlin, he was in radio contact with Theodor Busse, the General of the trapped 9th Army at Halbe, Germany where it was being systematically destroyed along with all the civilians. The Russians lined up wounded German soldiers and drove over them with T-34s then made the German women clean it up after raping them.

Wenck told his men that the war was finished, that Germany had lost and that now they were only fighting for “honor”, to save the 9th Army and tens of thousands of German refugees seeking to escape the rapacious Russians. His army held together to relieve the besieged garrison.

The Americans were on the left of the Elbe and the 12th Army was also on the left bank. Most bridges had been destroyed. Wenck went over the river with a small contingent in a Schwimmagen (Swimming) floating staff car while their artillery pounded Russian positions. The German 9th Army in a superhuman effort broke through the Russian army and swarmed to the river. By that time the Americans had caught up.

Wenck offered to surrender 2 German armies to this lowly soldier if the 9th Army and the refugees were allowed to cross the river before the Russians broke through the 12th Army defenses. It would be a slaughter if they did, total bloodlust. At first the American said no, but then the pissed Russians bombed the American positions out of anger or accident, killing a group of American soldiers and the American leader said, “Fuck it. Come on over.” But they were not allowed to bring weapons.

A massive pile of weapons and vehicles built up as the hysterical and shattered 9th Army tried to cross the damaged bridge to the American side. German 12th Army forces crossed in the other direction on makeshift bridges and took up the abandoned arms to hold off the Russians while the civilians and German army escaped to the other side. German MPs maintained order on the American side, still armed with machine pistols. The American leader told Wenck he could only keep his food system and medical system. The remaining armor was used in a futile holding attempt to restrain the Russians. All ammunition was expended. When most of the Germans had escaped over the engineer-built bridges, the Russians surged through the lines and slaughtered the wounded and civilians who had been unable to cross. Meanwhile, 200,000 soldiers and civilians surrendered to the protection of the American army (who later turned any SS soldiers over to the Russians).

German 12th Army vehicles abandoned after the surrender to the Americans.

Wenck was known as the “Boy General” and Hitler despised him but Guderian loved him. He was put in charge of the ill-fated “Operation Sonnenwende” (solstice), a brilliant counterstroke of Guderian’s near the end of the war, but the forces he needed were over-ruled by Hitler and after 3 - 4 days of pushing back the shocked Russians, the crippled German divisions folded up and the operation failed. Wenck had fallen asleep at the wheel of his car and hit a tree and was in a hospital. Hitler wanted to dismiss him but Guderian put him in charge of the reconstituted 12th Army which was meant to push the Americans back from the Elbe but when the Russians got close to Berlin, the plan changed; the 4th Army under Steiner and the 9th Army and 12th Army were to crush the Russians in a pincer. But Steiner had fewer than 600 armed men and not a single tank and two of the three Korps of the 9th Army were surrounded in Halbe - only the 56th Panzer Division had escaped and was moving to surrender to the Americans when its leader, General Wiedling, was forced into defending Berlin. Most of the German leadership escaped in an air convoy from Berlin on April 25th in what has become known as “The Flight of the Eagles”. Some of them escaped to Spain where they were interned.

The 9th Army was destroyed in the Halbe in some of the most vicious fighting of WW2. Only one supply drop was made by the Luftwaffe, consisting of 6 planes of which 3 were shot down. Theodor Busse in his special radio-command armored Hanomag made a daring escape.

The last message out of Berlin before the fall was “Where is Wenck?”. The high command, what was left of it, still believed that the Wenck and his army of broken-down divisions could save Berlin.

Wenck was heroic in his actions, and inspirational. He gave his men the opportunity to leave the army and go home - but they chose to fight and save the 9th Army and the civilians.

He died after the war after once again falling asleep at the wheel and hitting a tree.

Halbe is the biggest war cemetery in Germany. You can still find human remains and weapons in plain sight in the forest. People scout there often seeking souvenirs and ID discs.

Provided by Jay Bazzinotti - Updated Dec 29, 2024

Mental health professionals have asked me how the hell does war experience affect you? I just look at it as the paths I took in life. One day I will have to answer to God and I am fully prepared to do so. When I joined the Navy and became a SEAL, I did not do so thinking I would become an underwater basket weaver. I did so to serve my country and to protect the lives of others. I was fully trained and capable and did exactly what I was trained to do and tasked with doing. I asked for it and I carried it out. Do I wish certain things would have gone differently? Abso-fucking-lutely! But looking back on situations knowing what I knew THEN (NOT knowing what I know now), I probably would have handled most instances the same way.

So, for me personally, I am not affected by PTSD. I am not in denial of it either. I just am not affected by it. I wish I could explain how to conquer it to others that do struggle, but I can’t and can only offer my perspectives on how I look at it.

I think it’s all in how you perceive things. DG Operator – US Navy SEAL and DEVGRU operator written Jul 23, 2024. Comment by this writer – “Maybe this may help you deal with PTSD”

Not all wounds are visible – Call [988](tel:988) or text [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for help! PLEASE!

