

Wes: Our first story takes us to Europe during the dying days of World War II. It's May, 1945, 11 months since allied troops hit the Normandy beaches. Now, American G.I.s are battling their way into the heart of Germany. As they close in on Hitler's top lieutenants, they discover the Nazis are hiding hundreds of millions of dollars worth of stolen gold, currency, and art treasure. Sixty years later, a collector may have made a discovery that sheds new light on those final chaotic days of World War II. Jon Teaman is a painting collector from Lewiston, New York. A couple of years ago, he came across a startling find in an auction and couldn't quite believe the story that came with it.

Jon Teaman: That day, I drove about an hour, hour and a half to a small country auction which I had been to a few times before. And I was looking for paintings or furniture, but there happened to be this gun and the story behind it, which is what intrigued me: that this gun may have belonged to Hermann Goering.

Wes: I'm Wes Cowan, and I've asked Jon to come down to my auction house in Cincinnati, Ohio, so I can have a look at his shotgun. Hey, Jon, Wes Cowan.

Jon: Jon Teaman. Nice to meet you.

Wes: Nice to meet you. I see you brought the gun. All right, let's see what you got here. Oh, nice shotgun. If I had to guess, it's probably Belgian and it's a 12-gauge, double-barrel. Nice hunting gun. So where did you get it?

Jon: I picked it up at an auction. It had a great story behind it, and it came with this affidavit you might want to take a look at.

Wes: Let's see, "I, Pete Genard, along with my lieutenant and gunner in May of 1945 at Kapruin, Austria, did arrest Hermann Goering. Went into Goering's home, castle, and removed the aforementioned shotgun from the wall over the living room fireplace." That's quite a story, isn't it? I assume that you want me to find out if this story is true.

Jon: Exactly.

Wes: I've got to tell you that as an auctioneer, there's a lot of fake Nazi stuff out there. Anything else you can tell me about it?

Jon: Uh, I know Genard, he passed away, and he was from Pennsylvania.

Wes: Those are some good things to start with. I'd like to borrow the shotgun and the affidavit, if I could. Um, I'll take good care of them, and I'm ready to get going. I want to do a little research on Hitler's right-hand man. Was he really a gun collector? Hermann Wilhelm Goering was a notorious Nazi and at the top of the Allies' most wanted list. Head of the Luftwaffe, he personally supervised the bombing of London, and he was one of the architects of the final solution, which resulted in the murder of millions of Jews, dissidents, and homosexuals. Addicted to morphine, Goering was a compulsive collector of fine art, with a particular fondness for antique guns. Okay, well, listen, Goering was a big-time hunter, and he surrounded himself with guns. I've found an obituary for Pete Genard in a Pennsylvania newspaper, and it mentions a sister. I've tracked her down so I can learn more about her brother and his shotgun. I want to find out what I can about your brother, what he did during World War II.

Jessie: Well, he was a paratrooper.

Wes: So when did he enlist?

Jessie: I think 1942. I've got some pictures if you'd like to look at them.

Wes: Oh, great, huh! Now this one says "Pete." is that a nickname?

Jessie: Nickname, yeah, that's his nickname.

Wes: Aah, okay.

Jessie: We all called him Pete.

Wes: Well, he's wearing his cap with his paratrooper symbol on there, and, boy, there -- there's the symbol of the 101st Airborne, the Screaming Eagles. He's got the shoulder patch on there.

Jessie: He was very proud of them.

Wes: So now I know Genard was in the 101st. That's a potentially important bit of information. I ask Jessie if he ever mentioned Hermann Goering.

Jessie: He told me that him and his commanding officer and another enlisted man went in on a raid of Hermann Goering's castle and took them prisoners.

Wes: Did he ever talk about souvenirs?

Jessie: Oh, yes, he did. He sent back a big box with a false bottom in it, and in this box, when they took it apart, in the false bottom was all his guns that he had taken apart piece by piece and put them in army socks.

Wes: Now I've got something I want to show you, and I'm going to ask you if you recognize this at all. Do you ever remember seeing this?

Jessie: My god, yeah! Yeah, that's that gun he had. I think he sold that to a fellow up in Warren.

Wes: And where did he say it came from?

Jessie: He told me from Hermann Goering's castle. That's where he got all his souvenirs.

Wes: So Jessie's story matches the details in the affidavit. My next step is to have an expert appraiser take a look at the shotgun. I'm in Manhattan to meet Marty Lane, collector and appraiser with more than 30 years' experience dealing in antique guns. Marty?

Marty Lane: Hey, Wes.

Wes: Nice to meet you.

Marty: Nice to meet you. Come on in.

Wes: Thanks. Marty, here's the gun I was telling you about. I'm trying to find out if it belonged to Hermann Goering.

Marty: Well, it's a nice, old shotgun. The first thing we notice is the maker is Dumoulin. It's a Belgian maker. It is not their standard plain gun, but probably one or two grades higher than the standard. It has a pistol grip, some engraving.

Wes: What do you make of the maker's mark?

Marty: This firm, if I'm not mistaken, did go out of business in 1930, which would put it in the right time frame. Also, they exported to Germany and to other parts of Europe.

Wes: Now, you've handled a Goering gun before.

Marty: Yes.

Wes: How did it compare with this shotgun?

Marty: The Goering gun was much more deluxe, much more elaborate. On the forearm, it had Goering's crest, very distinct. It was mounted in gold. It was a fist or a gauntlet. He had many guns. He was a very avid hunter, and most of his guns were really quite deluxe.

Wes: Marty then spotted another problem, this time with the size of the stock.

Marty: Goering was a rather robust fellow, and more than likely, if he was using a gun like this, it probably would have had a little bigger stock. It could have been for someone on his staff or one of the hunters that came to his -- his home. As to whether or not this was actually a gun that Goering used, we'd have to call it a coin toss.

Wes: I'm at a bit of a dead end. This is not the type of fancy antique that Goering would have typically collected. I'll need to try another tack. It's time to take a closer look at the affidavit itself. I've come to the New York Public Library to research the details of Genard's story. So let's start with his account of Goering's arrest. Genard's affidavit says, "I, Pete Genard, along with my lieutenant and gunner, did arrest Hermann Goering and held them until a special detachment arrived to take them away." Okay, so what's the official story of Goering's arrest? It's May 1945. Hitler has committed suicide and the Third Reich is in its death throes. Goering is on the run, but he's weighed down by constantly moving his priceless art treasures. Paranoid and haunted by drug addiction, the heir to the Third Reich hides out in one of his many homes, Mauntendorf Castle in Austria. With few options, he finally decides to surrender to American troops and arranges to meet them at nearby Fischhorn castle. But which American troops? Was it Genard's 101st Airborne? No, it wasn't. It says here that it was a small detachment of the 36th Infantry that accepted Goering's surrender. It also lists the personnel involved. Maybe some of these G.I.s are still around. Les Leggett is one of the few people still alive who was there when Goering arrived at Fischhorn castle. Perhaps he can tell us if any members of the 101st were present and if Pete Genard was there. His memories of that historic day are as clear as a bell. Les, I want to find out what you remember about May 7, 1945.

Les Leggett: It was quite a moment in history for me, one of the grunts in World War II. We were in Kufstein, Austria, and we were told that the platoon was going on a combat mission. A high-speed chase went through Fern Pass and down to Fischhorn castle. We found the SS troops were fully armed. We established guard posts. By that time, we knew they were going after Hermann Goering, the Reichsmarschall. And at 11:30 that night, he showed up with a large entourage, and I got a chance to look into that gross Mercedes he was riding... (there was) this fat officer, and I had to believe that this was the head of the Luftwaffe that had given

us so many problems.

Wes: So do you remember G.I.s collecting souvenirs at Fischhorn castle?

Les: They were all looking for souvenirs. I got an 8-millimeter Mauser.

Wes: Of all the G.I.s at the castle, do you remember anybody there from the 101st Airborne?

Les: No. When we got there, we were the only American soldiers there.

Wes: Do you remember bumping into a G.I. named Andrew Genard?

Les: No. No, I do not. I knew our people from the 36th division, so I don't know of anyone that didn't have the T-patch on.

Wes: Well, there's a huge problem with Genard's story. An eyewitness says Pete Genard was not there when Goering surrendered. So where exactly was Pete Genard in May 1945? Is it possible he got hold of Hermann Goering's shotgun somewhere else? I've come back to the New York Public Library to double-check Genard's affidavit. The affidavit says he got the gun in May/June 1945 at Kapruin, Austria. Here's a book that details the locations of American troops in the European theater during World War II. I'll check this out. It says here the 101st Airborne moved down to the Kapruin region in mid-May. So Genard was in Kapruin. That town is only ten miles from Fischhorn Castle where Goering surrendered. It sounds as if Pete Genard was close enough to the action to have heard of Goering's capture but probably not there at the actual arrest. So I wonder where he got the shotgun. Ken Alford has written widely on the role of American troops in the final days of the Third Reich. He tells me that many of the G.I.s who had just fought their way across occupied Europe wanted to send souvenirs home.

Ken Alford: I would say that everybody picked up most everything they could get their hands on at the close of the war, which was true in most wars. Anything you could get in a mailbag during that time you could mail home.

Wes: For young men who were suddenly confronted with literally tons of Nazi gold, casual souveniring sometimes turned to outright looting.

Ken: Patton's Army overran a salt mine in Merkers, Germany. Now, there were some rumors that there was some gold down there. Finally, they went down to the bottom of that shaft and, sure enough, there was 285 tons of gold and equal value in currency.

Wes: Holy smokes!

Ken: Yes.

Wes: And...was any of that absconded with?

Ken: Even though the mine was under great protection, everybody could figure out how to get a little something. About \$265,000 was missing out of that huge treasure when it came down to the final accounting.

Wes: Did the Army brass know what was really going on?

Ken: Sure. I think most of them did, and most of them were in on it.

Wes: Ken, of the G.I. units in Germany, did any one unit have a reputation for looting more than any other?

Ken: They were wonderful young men. Don't get me wrong. They deserve all the credit that we could possibly give those wonderful young men that would fight that battle. And I would say the 101st had the stickiest fingers, and it may be because they had more opportunity because they were following more of the money trail.

Wes: Ken tells me that one of the most serious thefts of artwork in World War II was the disappearance of Hans Memling's "Madonna and Child". It also involved the 101st Airborne and Hermann Goering.

Ken: One of my favorite stories is a painting that was taken from the Fischhorn Castle. The 101st Airborne guy was assigned to the 7th Army Interrogation Center, and he needed to go to the castle because Goering told him he needed a suit and that painting. So he went to the castle and brought that painting back to the 7th Army Headquarters. That painting was passed around to a few people. I have a photograph of that officer holding that painting in his hand, and that's the last time that painting was seen. Uh, the Army investigated that painting considerably trying to find it. It's still missing today, and that painting is worth at least \$250 million dollars.

Wes: Wow! I then told Ken about the shotgun and the discrepancies in Pete Genard's affidavit. Ken explained that he's interviewed many G.I.s, and occasionally they stretch the truth of their wartime experiences, and end up believing their own more fanciful version of events. So how do you think this G.I. ended up with this shotgun?

Ken: This is how I think, possibly, the shotgun was collected, is anytime...

Wes: I'll bet Jon will certainly be interested in Ken's theory. The bad news in this case is that Genard was not there when Goering surrendered.

Jon: Darn it!

Wes: Then I told Jon Ken's theory on where the gun might have come from.

FLASHBACK TO KEN ALFORD

Ken: Anytime a village was occupied by U.S. forces, they would post a sign that says, all weapons must be turned in. So all the Germans brought their weapons down. Of course, the soldiers were sitting there waiting for that, and they would go in and take the best of those shotguns.

BACK TO JON TEAMAN

Wes: So what do you think?

Jon: Well, I'm a little disappointed, but, uh, that's the life of collecting antiques. You win some, you lose some.

Wes: Like a lot of these stories, the guy started believing it.

Jon: Right.



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Wes: I mean, you know, hey, I really did this. I told Jon that in spite of it all, his shotgun is a great collectible from the final chaotic days of World War II. The once-mighty Hermann Goering ended his days in a bare cell in Nuremberg after being tried in front of the world for his crimes against humanity. Delusional to the end, he cheated the gallows by committing suicide with a cyanide pill a mere two hours before he was to be executed.

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