

## Our Man Hoppe

Private Drab  
Surrenders

Arthur Hoppe

**I** SURRENDER! I surrender!" Private Oliver Drab, 378-18-4454, broke ranks and threw both hands in the air as Able Company filed across the tarmac to the waiting transport plane.

Captain Buck Ace was on him in a flash. "Hell's bells, Drab," he roared. "Now what are you up to?"

"I figure the time has come, sir," said Private Drab, "for me to surrender honorably to the enemy."

"What the hell are you talking about?" said the Captain. "That plane over there's waiting to take you Stateside. Give me one good reason why you want to surrender."

"Oh, I can give you lots, sir," said Drab, ticking them off on his fingers. "A new Mustang convertible, 31 flavors of Baskin - Robbins ice cream — I think I'll take chocolate fudge — free tickets to the San Diego zoo . . ."

"Drab," said Captain Ace suspiciously, "are you talking about the rewards a grateful nation is heaping on our heroic POWs?"

"Yes, sir, that's me. And I'm going to get a gold lifetime pass to the baseball games and free Yellow Cab rides and a trip to Disney World from the Orlando Chamber of Commerce and . . ."

The Captain scowled. "Soldier, are you saying you begrudge our POWs these rewards?"

Private Drab looked genuinely shocked. "Gosh, no, sir. I wouldn't of traded places with those poor guys for all the ice cream in the world. They deserve all they can get. And it's nice for the promoters, too. I just figure that as long as I'm going home anyway, I'd just as soon go home as a POW."

**T**HE CAPTAIN took a deep breath. "First of all, soldier, you're too late to surrender. The war's over."

"I still hear plenty of shooting going on, sir."

"That's between our allies and the Charlie's, Drab. It doesn't concern us. Not any more."

"I guess it's just my dumb luck, sir, to pick the wrong army."

"And secondly, you're only a common grunt, Drab. You're sure no hero."

"You're right about that, sir. I think I might've been a hero if it wasn't for this thing I got. You know, this thing I got about not wanting to get killed."

"And lastly, Drab, you weren't fighting for convertibles and ice cream."

"Well, like you know, sir, I never could figure out what I was fighting for."

"Peace with honor, damn it, Drab. Peace with honor! And the President's made it perfectly clear that together we've won it."

"Well, I'm sure glad we got the peace, sir," said Drab. "And I'm sure glad the President got the honor. But all things considered, now I'm going home anyway, I'd just as leave have a lifetime pass to the ball games."

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**L**ATER, on the plane, Private Drab turned to his seatmate and buddy, Corporal Partz. "I don't see what the Captain got so sore for," he said, "shouting and turning purple like that."

"The Captain's right, Oliver," said Corporal Partz. "You and me already got what we wanted out of this war."

"What's that?"

Corporal Partz leaned back in his seat and with a deep sigh closed his eyes. "Us," he said.