



SUMMER EDITION		JULY 1999
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### Another Editorial:

For years I (RC) have found it annoying that the bleeding hearts (and certain others) in our country could try and put a guilt trip on us for having used the A bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 to end a war the Japanese started. Remember the flap several years ago when the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC was planning to exhibit the nose section of the Enola Gay, the B29 that delivered the bomb to Hiroshima? The exhibit was to include a condemnation of the U.S. for their inhuman act, claiming that the Japanese didn't deserve such treatment because they had been merely trying to protect their culture when they started things against us on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941. We can be thankful that General Tibbets (the Enola Gay's pilot) objected strongly enough that the bleeding hearts backed down. The exhibit was altered to simply display the nose of the Enola Gay with no editorial comment, pro or con.

On May 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, The Learning Channel (via both cable and satellite) aired a program in their "Real History" series entitled "The Final Battle". If you didn't see it, you should have. It may be repeated this Fall, though it is not yet (in May, as I write this) on their Fall schedule. You can call TLC at 800 889 9950 after June to find out when and if it will be re-aired. "The Final Battle" deals with the Allied plans for the invasion of Kyushu and Honshu (Japan proper) made inevitable by their attack on Pearl Harbor. Guess who were to be re-trained and redeployed to make up most of the invasion force? We were, of course. The program quoted expert estimates of the U.S. KIAs that would result from such an invasion, and the basis for their enormity. Used as a basis were the casualties *actually experienced* by U.S. forces in the invasions of Okinawa and Iwo Jima. An invasion of the sacred homeland was expected to produce a battle far exceeding the ferocity what had been experienced on those less-sacred Japanese possessions...Truly, a fight to the death. The figures are awesome, most vividly demonstrated by the number of body bags ordered for the expected casualties. As I recall the number, it was between 500,000 and 800,000. That's a lot more than all the casualties at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined...and all of these would have been KIAs...ours! How could any reasonable person, civilian or otherwise, believe that ending the war the way we did was a cruel and heartless act...or an inhuman one? Only the other side. I personally believe that the culture of the East then, and perhaps even now, considered Caucasians to be subhuman, even barbaric at best...Such might explain the Japanese attitude. Anyway, if you can manage it, you ought to see and possibly record the program for the benefit of any doubters you might encounter. I hope it will be repeated, though TLC probably received a lot of flak for running it, probably from the same group of bleeding hearts that believed the holocaust to be a hoax...and the fire bombing of Japan unjustified. To know the real truth, one has only to ask any veteran of the European Campaign how certain he felt about his future in June 1945 when he found out what the Assembly Area Command at Reims was *really* up to.

## Remembrances:

Bob McElroy's memory continues to provide him with recollections of things past, and fortunately for us, he continues to be willing to share them with you and I...We are indebted to him and others like him for that. Urged on by Rob Smith and me [RC], Bob has recently provided his recollections compiled from some of the events he remembers taking place from 26 April until 3 June 1945...While we were "occupying" the town of Hohenlimburg, Germany.

He recalls that in late April [the 26<sup>th</sup> from RC's diary], the AT Company arrived to occupy Hohenlimburg, Germany, a very pleasant little village on the Ruhr River in Westphalia. At the time, the 75<sup>th</sup> ID was assigned to the U.S. XVI Corps of the Ninth Army, attached to British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery's 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group. AT Company's Command Post was set up in the Hotel Bentheimer Hof, within which all of the company's Headquarters Platoon was quartered. The hotel's kitchen and dining room were large enough so food could be prepared and the entire company could take their meals together for the first time since leaving Porthcawl, Wales. The four line platoons were comfortably quartered in nearby apartment houses.

Platoon leaders were given various administrative assignments associated with the occupation of the town. Bob was appointed Town Major, which he hastens to explain did not amount to an army promotion. Rather, it was a title more than likely dictated by Allied Military Government protocol. Lt. Woodrow Fisher remained the town's ranking occupational commander.

Members of the German military all carried Soldbüchs that held nearly complete records of their military service, citing their units, promotions, awards, wounds and any other information pertaining to their duties and service. Because of these documents, it was possible to identify and arrest those with close ties to the Nazi party and/or those who held important positions in the German government. The Germans themselves didn't seem to understand how we were able to read and decipher the information these papers contained. But because of this ability on our part, it became relatively easy to identify the most fanatical party members by simply studying their papers.

Strangely enough, some of the Nazi officials thought themselves to be more important than we thought them to be. Bob recalls that the former burgomeister of Hohenlimburg (or possibly of one of the nearby villages) was said to have murdered his family and committed suicide in the belief that the Allies would arrest and send them all off to a concentration camp. The effort was wasted because, according to Raze, this guy wasn't even on the list of officials subject to arrest. He didn't rank as high as he thought he did in the party hierarchy, and therefore, wouldn't have been considered a risk to a peaceful Allied Occupation.

In the following narratives, many of Bob's recollections are repeated in the first person, but are sometimes paraphrased to maintain continuity and may not always be literal quotations.

Some of the people interrogated would give us an argument when caught in a lie, unable to believe that we were well enough informed to know how to interpret the papers they carried. We had orders to send any servicemen to a POW camp if the date of his discharge from the army was on or after 6 June 1944 (D-Day). We heard a lot of arguments from soldiers who insisted that they were no longer members of the armed forces. Some of their discharges were hand-written documents signed by commanders of various ranks of both large and small army units. We always won those arguments.

Another thing that helped us to detect former German soldiers was an Allied edict that the houses on both sides of any house sheltering former soldiers masquerading as civilians were to be burned to the ground. Whenever a

former member of the military was identified as such, we would immediately lock him in the town jail until the end of the day and then ship him off to a POW camp that evening. One day this resulted in a bazaar incident: A soldier, accompanied by his wife and baby, surrendered at the company CP. However, the soldiers collected during that day had already been shipped off to a POW camp, so this man was told to return home and report back the next morning. He and his family returned to the CP within a half hour, saying that their next-door neighbors wouldn't allow them back in their house for fear that we would come and burn *their* houses down. Bob had to accompany them back to their home and explain to the neighbors that they had permission to return home for the night. Early the next morning the soldier and his family appeared promptly outside the CP, ready to be sent off to a POW camp.

Some German enlisted men felt that they could always deceive us by denying that they had been members of the Wehrmacht or any other military organization. Officers, on the other hand, would show up wearing their uniforms or carrying them in a suitcase. They would show us their Soldbüch and readily admit who and what they were. If they weren't wearing their uniforms, we would tell them to put them back on. Their behavior may have been prompted by a desire to receive the special treatment they expected to get as officer POWs. We even had one old man (over 75 years old and barely able to walk with a cane) who had served in WWI, insist that we send him off to a POW camp. Most of the former soldiers with whom we dealt were puzzled at how we sorted them out, sending some to POW camps and others back to their homes. They never understood the connection between the D-Day date and the date of discharge showing on their papers.

Many of you have heard of the odyssey undertaken by Dalton Raze and "Billy Joe" Rogers soon after we arrived at Hohenlimburg. It was one of the more curious of events that has always seemed worthy of the retelling. For years, several of us tried without success to get either Dalton or Billy to recount it. Neither was willing to do so, but with Dalton's death in 1997 and Billy's just this past June 3, our sources seemed to be drying up. However, in his assigned duty as Town Major, Bob was privy to some, if not all of the details of the affair. He has included what he knew and remembers about it with this, his most recent contribution to the M/C.

Dalton had been assigned the job of screening the population of Hohenlimburg for high ranking members of the Nazi party or of German military units, many of whom were trying to blend into the civilian population and thereby escape the attention their past activities had earned for them. These interrogations were surprisingly successful, partly because of the population's ingrained respect for authority and order, and partly because of identity papers, ("kentekartes" in the case of women) which they *had* to carry. These papers essentially catalogued their role in the Reich and had to be available for inspection and verification on demand by their own government authorities. They expected to have to submit them to the Allied authorities and did so willingly, though they were unhappy when the latter failed to stamp them with the date and location of the inspection, possibly interpreting the failure as disapproval. Such papers made it virtually impossible for ordinary Germans to hide their past activities from anyone, particularly from interrogation teams that understood the language...which ours did.

Bob recalls that the screening process was carried out at the town hall by Lt. Raze, Cpl. Robert Smith, and an interpreter or two [one of these may have been Paul Guhl]. At some early point in these interrogations, a German officer told Lt. Raze that he could lead them to Martin Bormann. [Bormann, you may recall was one of Hitler's favorite confidantes, the secretary of the

Nazi party and executor of Hitler's Last Will and Testament. He had been in the Führerbunker on 30 April at the moment of Hitler's suicide and had helped to carry his body outside for cremation. He was also the person who then notified Admiral Karl Doenitz that Hitler had bequeathed to him the leadership of the country. Shortly before the surrender of Berlin on May 1, Bormann mysteriously disappeared and thereby became an urgently sought war criminal by the Allies.]

Thus, one morning, Lt Fisher (our CO at the time, having succeeded a recently reassigned Rudy Gillen) apprised Bob that Lt. Raze would be undertaking a special, secret assignment. As Bob recalls it now, Raze probably told him details no longer remembered, regarding by whom and how the arrangements were made, but he (Raze) and the German officer were given the mission to track down and attempt to capture Bormann. They donned civilian clothing and accompanied by PFC Rogers, set out to track him down. During Raze's absence, Bob was to pick up his screening duties.

From what Raze told Bob afterwards, it seemed that they had indeed been close on Bormann's trail, seldom more than a week or so behind him, but never getting close enough for a capture attempt. It's not clear now just what route they followed nor for how long they followed it...But certainly if they were still with us, either Raze or Billy Joe could add much more to the story of this most unusual and interesting assignment. Bob *does* recall Raze confiding some of the confrontations encountered during their search...Such as those when they were stopped at road blocks [remember they were in civilian garb, probably riding in an army jeep] and finding the British tougher to satisfy than Americans. Raze was armed with his .45 cal. automatic concealed in a shoulder holster under his outer clothing, and unless prompted to do so by extenuating circumstances, didn't betray the fact that he spoke English. At one point, he and his companions were stopped by an American unit at a roadblock and taken to their CP to be questioned. The non-com who brought them to his CO, described them as "jokers". Raze, in his inimitable way, stepped forward to say that he didn't like being referred to as a joker. He then reached inside his clothing to reveal that he was carrying a .45 pistol, thereby demonstrating that the men at the roadblock were incompetent, if not jokers themselves for having failed to check their suspects for weapons.

In closing, Bob has observed "The more I hear some of these stories, I become aware that there must be thousands [more] that need to be and should be told." You other members of the Company that haven't shared your remembrances with the rest of us, should do so before they become even more hazy than they are today. A few more years and there won't be many of us left to give them the attention they deserve. Think about it ...RC

At this point, it seems appropriate to report with sorrow the death June 3, 1999 of yet another member of the Company: William J. (aka Billy Joe) Rogers. He died from post operative complications three weeks after completion of apparently successful heart surgery that had involved four bypasses, replacement of a carotid artery, and a heart valve. He is survived by his wife, Connie, a daughter and three grandchildren....RC