

VALHALLA FINALE

By ANNA ROSMUS, *Honorary Member of the 65th Division Association*



VALHALLA
FINALE

- Features Major General Stanley Reinhart
- Many photos of the 65th Division History in Germany & Austria
- Excellent Gift that will be treasured by our Children & Grandchildren

In Norse mythology, Valhalla (hall of the slain) is an enormous, majestic hall. Odin, the chief god, invites half of those who die in combat to travel there. Led by valkyries (female choosers of the slain), the dead join Germanic heroes and kings, as they prepare for ragnarök (twilight of the gods). In war gear, they battle one another every day. When mealtime comes, however, they ride home to Valhalla and drink.

In 1945, American intelligence officers debated a "Valhalla Finale" in the Danube region. General Patton was pacing the floor as his men seized the "Regensburg-Passau-Linz Corridor". To indicate the complex operations, Valhalla Finale features photographic impressions from Bavaria's border with Czechoslovakia and Austria.

It reflects individual memories and the enormous power that American commanders applied with such remarkable restraint.

The 60th and 61st anniversaries of VE-Day brought together, once more, US veterans and inmates they freed from the horrors of captivity. Together, they were received as guests of honor, and they visited sites of atrocities.

During combat, most soldiers neither owned nor carried a camera, film was hard to come by, and official images were divided among many locations. Fortunately, Brigadier General Stanley Eric Reinhart, Jr., whose father captured Regensburg, Passau, and Schärding before he was appointed Military Governor of Upper Austria, was among those who offered his private treasure trove.

Granting a greater public access to combined sources allows veterans to relive their own history, and younger ones glimpses at a past they might have few clues about until reading the book.

Follow your comrades from Camp Lucky Strike to Austria. Watch them marching, build

bridges, evacuate casualties, take prisoners and help rebuilding a country. Follow your own trail, and see hundreds of never published photos from 1945!

Valhalla Finale has 350 pages and a hardcover. It's also an excellent gift idea for family, colleagues and friends. It will be released on November 30, 2009. The publisher offers veterans a special pre-sale discount of \$ 47.95 + postage which is expected to be available until Christmas or the new year. After that date, a \$15 discount will be offered to veterans and their families who order directly from the publisher. If you are interested, contact Doris Dorfmeister at:

dorfmeisterdruck@t-online.de.

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an introduction to
VALHALLA FINALE

By ANNA ROSMUS

Author, and Honorary Member of the 65th Division Association

Introduction

In Norse mythology, Valhalla (hall of the slain) is an enormous, majestic hall. Odin, the chief god, invites half of those who die in combat to travel there. Led by valkyries (female choosers of the slain), the dead join Germanic heroes and kings, as they prepare for Ragnarök (twilight of the gods). In war gear, they battle one another every day. When mealtime comes, however, they ride home to Valhalla and drink.

At the age of ten, I read about Valhalla. Later, with students, I visited Valhalla on the Danube below Regensburg, a temple that Leo von Klenze built for Ludwig I of Bavaria in the 19th century. Adults never told us that in 1945, American intelligence officers debated a "Valhalla Finale" in the anticipated combat for the Danube region. Nobody had mentioned the significance of the "Regensburg-Linz Corridor".

After graduating from the Gymnasium Leopoldinum in Passau, Bavaria, I began to uncover my hometown's Nazi past on my own. I eagerly asked what were uncomfortable, if not forbidden, questions. Michael Verhoeven turned my personal journey into this world of concealment and deception into the Oscar-nominated film *The Nasty Girl*. That film is still used today by colleges and other schools to stimulate debates about Germany and WWII.

As a freelance writer, I have contributed articles to scholarly anthologies, magazines and newspapers, such as *La Pensée et les Hommes*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, *The New York Times*, *The European* and *Aufbau*.

Professor Robert E. Herzstein wrote in *The Journal of The Historical Society* II:

"Senior German historians wrote dense prose devoted to leaders and institutions, to structures, and to cumulative radicalization. ... It was all appropriate - and impersonal. In the constructs and the textbooks, there was little room for inquires into local crimes and perpetrators, even when the unnamed bodies were buried near one's home and the killers lived a few blocks away. In this fog of oversight, Anna Rosmus' remarkable studies of the Passau region in Bavaria stand out as the rare exception. Despite the opposition of her teachers and of the people who ran Bavaria's educational establishment in the late 1970s, Rosmus decided to examine the history of the town of Passau during the years of the Third Reich. She has never stopped, and in the process has found the bodies and identified living culprits. ..."

To gather evidence, I moved to America, taking up residence only minutes away from the National Archives in College Park. I have interviewed numerous American soldiers in General Patton, Jr.'s 3rd Army who once fought along

the Danube River or were stationed there after combat ended.

The University of South Carolina published my books *Against the Stream: Growing up Where Hitler Used to Live*, and *Out of Passau: Leaving a City Hitler Called Home*. Both books document encounters with American veterans. Before long, the University followed up with my book *Wintergreen: Suppressed Murders*, which documents some of the worst atrocities in Passau at the end of the war, just as tens of thousands of General Patton, Jr.'s men were converging on that bastion. My sources included the first documents I obtained and oral testimonies by American soldiers who worked hard to establish the facts and unveil the details of the crimes that baffled their minds and haunted many for decades.

Among the most touching honors I have ever received was being elected by veterans associations as their Honorary Member. When Major General Stanley Eric Reinhart's 65th Infantry Division Association did so in the summer of 1995, I was not only their sole female member, but also the only foreigner, and very likely the only one who never carried any weapon other than the spirit and determination to overcome willful subjugation and injustice wherever it may occur. In my thank you address I stated:

"... As a German from a postwar generation, it means a lot to me to get to know you better because I

am very well aware of how much we all owe you. It also means a lot, because I have an opportunity to thank you. That is belated to be sure. And of course, words can never equal what you did for us. But I want you to know that there are many people in Bavaria and Austria who never forgot you, people who witnessed your courage, your struggle, and your fighting spirit in a war that was not yours. I want you to know that there are also many people, who remember another aspect, people who experienced your charm, your good hearts, your friendly and forgiving nature, people who remember you as 'fraternizing' neighbors, as friends, as partners, and as lovers, too"

I wanted the next generation to know about the veterans. I wanted schools to teach that "story". This book should give them the credit they deserve, and remind us of what we regained decades ago: Our freedom. It should also remind us, never ever to gamble with something so precious again.

In the spring of 1995, for the 50th anniversary of VE-Day, I sponsored a series of commemorations in Germany and Austria, bringing survivors, liberators and their families together with locals to preserve this part of our mutual history. On that occasion, we began to restore the defaced Kirchham Concentration Camp Memorial.

Over the course of ten months, Felix Kuballa shot footage of the somewhat unconventional preparations for this trip in his documentary, *Passau-Washington: The Nasty Girl in America*. 60 Minutes-producer Barbara Dury shot footage during the 65th Infantry Division's reunion in

Biloxi, Mississippi.

To celebrate the 60th anniversary of VE-Day, I sponsored another series of events that brought together, once more, US-veterans and inmates they freed from the horrors of captivity. Together, we dedicated a monument to DP infants who perished near Pocking after combat.

As the years passed, I became a comrade in spirit, a friend and an ally as well as a confidante in trying times. American veterans visiting me and my parents became a common event. Standing side by side with many of them for years, I attended private funerals and spectacular ceremonies such as the dedication of the WWII memorial in Washington, D.C. in 2004. There were also semi-private events such as the reception by WWII veteran Bob Dole and his wife Elizabeth, or nationwide celebrations such as the US President's inauguration in 2005. I continue to be present, with and for the men of General Patton, Jr.'s 3rd Army.

During combat, most soldiers neither owned nor carried a camera, and film was hard to come by. Brigadier General Robert Upp from the 65th Infantry Division recalls that his "camera was stolen while the unit was still in France, so I took no pictures during all of the combat duty across Germany and Austria." Ed Lewis, editor of the division's newsletter, "had taken four rolls of 35-mm film, and found a house that had a darkroom. I developed the films and hung them up to dry. The next morning we pulled out, and I forgot the four rolls of negatives."

Nonetheless, my struggle for the truth resulted in finding a wide

variety of photographic evidence. Toward the end of 2008, the question arose concerning how to share some of these events with locals and veterans alike. During a breakfast at Passau's Wilder Mann Hotel, its owner Georg Höttl suggested publishing a photo book. He envisioned a multitude of photographs on glossy paper showing the soldiers' arrival.

In the spring of 1945, as a juvenile, he had witnessed this event in Tittling, in the Bavarian Forest north of Passau. Now, at the age of eighty, he could still "see" the soldiers approaching as he and his friend sat in front of his parents' house. He never forgot what it was like to be in the soldiers' hands, and he welcomes them back as guests of honor whenever such an opportunity arises.

As enticing as Höttl's proposal was, it also posed a major task. To indicate the complex operations, Valhalla Finale was to feature photographic impressions from Bavaria's border with Czechoslovakia and Austria. Among other things, it should also reflect individual memories and the enormous power that American commanders applied there with such remarkable restraint.

A wealth of private and official evidence had to be checked, sorted and commented on. Even the official images taken were divided among many locations. While some had gone to commanders, some in collections for internal use such as unit publications, others were deposited at archives for posterity. Granting a greater public access to combined sources of that kind was an amazing opportunity. It would allow the older generation to relive its

own history, and younger ones glimpses at a past they might have few clues about until reading the book.

Many photos were bent, torn, faded or scratched, however, exact locations or persons in others unidentified. While low resolution was fine for websites, it posed a problem in print. Without much text to explain the context or sequence, other photographs might not be understood. And with multiple units having a distinct routing but a similar timeline and location, overlappings seemed unavoidable, but as soon as I mentioned the very idea of such a photo volume, a very capable and active team emerged to tackle these issues simultaneously from several angles.

In Washington state, Daniel William O'Brien, president of the 11th Armored Division, volunteered to verify data, check vehicles and weapons for proper description.

Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Seeman made photos available from his time in the US Army Air Force. Assigned to the 766th Bomb Squadron at Hammer Field in Fresno, California, Seeman had assumed command of a Consolidated B-24 bomber and flight crew. In January, 1944, his bomber "Kissed Off Kids" left for overseas. His route led east across the United States, south to Brazil, then east across the South Atlantic Ocean to Africa, and finally north to a staging area at Tunis, on the south shore of the Mediterranean Sea. There, all aircraft of the 461st Bomb Group assembled for combat deployment.

Armed with defensive weapons, the group was based at the Torretta Army Air Force base near

Cerignola, Italy. Crew #43 was first committed to action on April 3, 1944, and flew a total of forty-seven combat bombing missions in Italy, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Germany, and France.

In Florida, Brigadier General Stanley Eric Reinhart, Jr., the son of the Major General who captured Regensburg, Passau, Pocking and Schärding before he was appointed Military Governor of Upper Austria, offered to make available items of his father's private treasure-trove. Among precious other things, it contained photos by Marcos Chamudes, a Sephardic Jew and fabled immigrant from Chile who served as the 65th Infantry Division photographer. Assigned to the S-2 (Intelligence) Section of the engineer battalion, he documented combat operations and meetings with Soviet generals. Chamudes captured the essence of the characters portrayed.

In Northern California, Willard Wyman, author of *High Country*, and a former dean of students at both Stanford University and Colby College, offered some of his father's photo collection. In 1945, the late Four-Star General Willard Gordon Wyman had led the 71st Infantry Division to victory.

In North Carolina, Robert Fitzgerald Patton, a former president of the 65th Infantry Division Association, offered pictures he had at hand or could arrange for. Jim Hanson in South Dakota hunted down photos of his father Maynard, who found himself stationed in Linz at the end of combat. Tom Tucker from the 5th Infantry Division in California pulled out photos of his time in Czechoslovakia and in

Aidenbach.

In Tennessee, Sue Townsend, the daughter of Passau's GI Arthur Burian, offered to proofread the English text and to "do what I can for the 'injured' photos." Together with General Reinhart, Jr. she also worked on the cover.

In Passau, Germany, my dad edited German captions.

While I started telling the story of General Patton, Jr.'s men reaching their final destination in the European Theater with heaps of visual images, in the end, it was not only the actual photos' existence here or there, but perhaps even more so mutual trust and working together that enabled us to document in greater detail the multi-faceted end of this trail.

Best, Anna