

THE 2019 PILSEN LIBERATION FESTIVAL

by William Jannace, Member

Reprinted with permission from www.worldwariowordsmyuncle.blogspot.com



BOBA Member William Jannace (front) participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the 2nd Infantry Division monument in Pilsen, along with local citizens and students.

In May 2019, William Jannace, son of PFC Anthony E. Jannace, went to the annual Pilsen Liberation Festival. Below is his letter to the people of Pilsen.

Dear Citizens of Pilsen,

I recently represented my family at the 2019 Liberation of Pilsen Festival honoring the Second Infantry and Sixteenth Armored Divisions, French, Belgium and Czech soldiers that were involved in its liberation. Our father (PFC Anthony E. Jannace, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, Second Infantry Division) was awarded the Purple Heart in 1945, just before the liberation of Pilsen, and passed away many years ago—before the Velvet Revolution, and thus unable to enjoy this celebration of freedom. To his credit, after sustaining injuries, he took part in the liberation in May 1945.

Words cannot describe the gratitude and appreciation I have for Glynn Raby (who was in the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 2ID) and Tomas Hataj (Men of the Second Infantry Association), Tomas Raboch (Pilsen-joy S.R.O.) and the people of Pilsen and its government, for the heartfelt celebration and commemoration of the Second Infantry and Sixteenth Armored Divisions' Liberation of Pilsen. As the son of a veteran of the 2ID, it was an emotion-filled and humbling weekend. The sacrifices of that generation can never be quantified, nor will time diminish their heroism, as the numbers do not begin to tell the whole story. Nor can the debt of gratitude ever be repaid.

I am an attorney and a Professor at Fordham Law School, and thus responsible for teaching and upholding the rule of law. However, modesty and humility compel me to acknowledge the many citizen-soldiers of the US Armed Forces, many of whom came from humble backgrounds. They are the ones that sacrificed their blood, limbs and lives to truly uphold the rule of law, and to make a better world (albeit not perfect) for all in the second half of the 20th Century.

It was truly a global effort of the better angels of humanity that arose

to defeat tyranny and oppression. To the credit of the people of the Czech Republic, who persevered another 45 years after the end of the war, you never relented in your desire for freedom—very much evident on display this past weekend. As was noted at the various wreath-laying ceremonies, freedom should and can never be taken for granted. I was particularly honored when Earl Ingram, Colonel, US ARMY, Retired (and an officer of the 2ID) asked me to participate in the wreath-laying ceremony at the 2ID Memorial.

I was overwhelmed with a sense of patriotism and pride with each speech given by Czech and US dignitaries, including George Patton Waters, the grandson of General George Patton, who spoke with such heartfelt, self-effacing humility about his grandfather. To hear the young children sing and perform at The Patton School, where a wreath-laying ceremony was held, was beyond gratifying, and gives me hope that the Trans-Atlantic partnership (the anchor of the Bretton Woods System) will persevere, as the desire for freedom, democracy and rule of law can be temporarily side-tracked, but never eradicated.

Tears and chills are what I felt the entire weekend: chills each time I heard the U.S. and Czech National Anthems; tears at each wreath-laying ceremony, thinking of my father, who persevered another 26 years in the US Army Reserves (retiring as an SFC), despite having been wounded in Germany and sustaining frost bite in the Ardennes, where his battalion received a unit citation for its heroism. Despite that, he loved his country, the Army, and always considered the men that did not return from WWII as the real heroes worthy of adulation. If you knew him, he was modest and spoke little about this time.

I am looking forward to next year's celebration.

To paraphrase the motto of the 2ID: Pilsen, its people, and its liberators are "Second to None."

Sincerely and Respectfully, William Jannace

To read more stories about the Bulge and WWII, go to the website: worldwariowordsmyuncle.blogspot.com



Jannace in front of the statue of General Patton in the town of Dýšina, near Pilsen.