

Revisits battlefield

Veteran of Monte Cassino recalls his comrades

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

For Stanley Lapinski, the Battle of Monte Cassino began when he was a student in pre-World War II Poland. That battle's repercussions haven't quite ended for the Farmington Hills resident. A member of the Polish Veterans' Association which keeps the memory of the victory alive, Lapinski

recently traveled back to Italy to view the place where he once fought along with other members of the Second Polish Corps.

Part of the association's trip was dedicated to an audience with Pope John Paul II in his summer home. The group met the pontiff shortly after his trip to Poland in May.

But the other focal point of their trip to Italy was the reconstructed Monte Cassino which traces its history back to its 11th century founder, St. Benedict.

The breaking of Monte Cassino as a German stronghold during May 11-18, 1944 opened a road to Rome for the Allies. The Polish Army under the direction of the Polish government in exile in London played a key role in taking the fortress.

That victory was a turning point in Lapinski's war time travels which took him away from his homeland.

He never returned. At the end of the war, his father wrote, advising him to

stay in England because post-war Poland was in turmoil.

His journey began in 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland. Unaided by its allies, Poland fell. Its officials fled to London where they established a Polish government in exile and pinned their hopes on England helping to re-establish their country.

When Germany turned its sights on Poland, Lapinski was among the male college students who were drafted into the army.

"We were not prepared for war," he said. "We led a quiet life in Poland."

After German troops marched into the country, the government in exile

ordered the Polish troops stationed near the borders to leave the beleaguered country.

Troops straggled into neighboring Romania, Latvia and Lithuania. Those who couldn't get out of the country formed parts of the underground resistance to the Germans.

Lapinski managed to get to Lithuania where the government gave the exiled troops food, lodging and an allowance. But their haven didn't last long.

"One day, one of the men woke up and began to cry that the Russians were here. We all looked out, and there were Russians surrounding us."

The Polish troops were taken to Soviet work camps and prisons. They joined Poles who were doing forced labor in mines and factories.

"The children were skin and bones," remembered Lapinski who now works for Giffels Associates Inc., Southfield.

Things changed after Germany turned on its Soviet ally in 1941.

Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin joined the Allied forces and let the Polish troops go free after the signing of the Sikorski-Mejski Treaty on June 30, 1941.

When the troops left, the forced labor parties went with them.

They eventually settled in camps in Iran, Iraq and Palestine.

Schooling was set up for the children. Medical care was given to the troops and laborers.

But medical attention wasn't enough for some of the persons who were in the camps. They were mentally and physically run down.

To help lift their spirits, field theaters began. Lapinski was part of this movement. It was in the theater movement that he met his wife Frances.

SHE HAD BEEN PART OF the resistance in Poland. They were married before he was sent to fight with the Allied troops.

After the war, Lapinski settled his wife and children in Argentina for 15 years.

"It's beautiful. The people there live like people in Poland," he said.

The lack of political stability in that country sent him to the United States 15 years ago. He held a visa to the US for eight years before actually using it.

Postal customers told to guard against fraud

American consumers lost more than \$489 million to mail fraud and misrepresentation by mail over each of the last five years, according to Farmington Postmaster Kenneth B. Harris.

Sept. 24-29 has been designated the fourth-annual Postal Consumer Protection Week by Postmaster General William F. Bolger to heighten public awareness of the problem.

Postmaster Harris emphasized that the majority of companies who are a part of the \$60 billion mail-order industry are honest and dedicated to customer satisfaction. But a few operators are out to bilk the public, as in many other industries.

"The nation's best defense against unsolicited mail fraud and misrepresentation is an informed public," Harris said.

"Everyone should be constantly on guard against what are really unbelievable claims and get rich quick schemes."

The Postal Inspection Service investigates mail fraud and false representation by mail, and assists with mail-order and service problems.

"Scandals aimed at consumers are limited only by the imagination of the con artist," Harris said. "Because they've learned that many people are willing to invest their hard-earned money on offers which sound too good to be true."

Typical examples of mail frauds and false representations by mail include a variety of investment offers, phony franchises, miraculous "cures" for a variety of illnesses, weight-reducing plans with no proven medical value, and work-at-home schemes.

"The elderly are quite often prime targets for these schemes," Harris said. "Because they are trying to protect their savings from the effects of inflation."

Postmaster Harris urged consumers to ask companies to back up their claims if an offer sounds unbelievable and too good to be true.

"That's the best way to protect yourself," he said. "But if you feel you've lost money to a fraud, or haven't received the merchandise you ordered, contact my office or a postal inspector."

Phone numbers are listed under U.S. Government Postal Service in local telephone directories.

Harris reminded customers that whenever they have a problem with their mail service, to fill out a postal consumer service card, available at post offices and from letter carriers.

"We need as much information as possible to help someone with a mail problem, and the easy-to-complete card assures prompt action on our part."

Art lecture, slide show highlights 'Pioneer' tea

Artist and lecturer Max Shaye will be the speaker at the Pioneer Women, Greater Detroit Council, membership tea on Sept. 27 at 1 p.m. at the Labor Zionist Institute, 28555 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

"Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Art and Were Afraid to Ask," is the subject of the talk which will be illustrated by a 40 minute slide presentation.

The painting "Shetl Winter" has been donated by the artist to be awarded as a door prize.

Paid up members, guests and prospective members will be admitted free. Payment of dues will be accepted at the door.

Mary Shuster of Oak Park, vice president of membership, is chairwoman of

the day. Adeline Salinger of Farmington Hills, co-vice president, will speak on membership. Ruth Miller of Birmingham is council president.

Pioneer Women is an influence on child care in Israel. Nearly 20,000 children are cared for in 500 day care centers across the country.

Originally, Pioneer Women was formed to provide the training and education of the Israeli women and her family so each can be best equipped to lead full, productive lives.

Each year, the National Board of Pioneer Women sets a new member goal for the local council. This year's goal is 374 new members to meet the constantly expanding services provided by Pioneer Women.

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