

## Berlin's Allied Museum helps visitors remember, understand common history of allies, Germany

By Dave Melancon

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**BERLIN** -- The Allied Museum here is dedicated to helping visitors remember the common past shared by the Germans and the allied forces who served in Berlin.

In honor of Germany's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the museum has prepared a special exhibit remembering the U.S., British and French Soldiers who patrolled the wall's perimeter and stood watch over the city during the wall's rise and fall from 1961 to 1990.

The "Wall Patrol" exhibit is housed in the former Nicholson Community Center and is open until April 5, 2010. Photos, videos, map, military reports and artifacts -- ranging from a British Army "Ferret" scout car, uniforms to telephone directories -- show visitors the day-to-day reality of what it was like for allied troops to stand eye to eye with East German border guards and former Soviet soldiers.



DAVE MELANCON

Dr. Helmut Trotnow, director of Berlin's Allied Museum, answers a schoolgirl's question about the Cold War, Nov. 7. The girl and her friends were celebrating a party at the museum.

"Our mission was twofold. First, show the flag -- our American presence -- so we would reassure the West Berliners that (we were) there to defend them to the death if necessary," said Dr. Harold E. Raugh Jr. of the V Corps command history office during a Nov. 5 ceremony celebrating the exhibit's grand opening. "We were there to show the East Germans and the Soviets that we meant business." During the late 1970s, Raugh served as platoon leader of a scout platoon that patrolled the wall.

"Ever since the end of the second world war, German history and Berlin's history never belong to the Germans alone," said Dr. Helmut Trotnow, Allied Museum director. "You had tens of thousands of young Americans, young Britons and young Frenchmen serving in Berlin, seeing and experiencing the confrontation with the communist system."

While many visitors remember their past and researchers comb through its artifacts and records, the museum is working to introduce history to younger people, Trotnow said.

“Museums for young kids are not necessarily exciting unless they have something to do with toys,” he said, adding that parents and teachers are always welcome to join in. “We want them to know that history can be exciting to find out new information.”

The same lessons apply to the current generation of military leaders and Soldiers.

“We’ve had many groups of young officers come here and for the first time they realize why the American presence in Berlin and Germany during the Cold War was so important,” the historian said. “Here they see how the American presence changed life for the good.”

Without their contributions, he added, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Germany’s reunification “would not have been possible.”

Former allied servicemembers donated artifacts and their personal stories to the museum, Trotnow said. They also told the curators where to search for information in national archives or within other historic collections.

The museum’s primary purpose is to show visitors the Allied forces role in a divided Germany, Trotnow said. Visitors can come on their own or with a military or school group. Tours can be given in German, English or French.

The museum, owned by the German federal government, opened its doors in 1994 with a study of early post-World War II U.S.-German relationships titled, “It began With a Kiss,” that depicted the days when allied forces began their departures from Berlin, he said.

“Our first exhibition was successful. Within three months, we had more than 70,000 visitors,” Trotnow said.

The museum is located on the former U.S. Army Europe’s Berlin Brigade headquarters kaserne, with its permanent collection on display in the 1950s-era “Outpost” movie theater. The “Wall Patrol” exhibition is on display in a former community library named for Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson, a U.S. officer murdered in the former East Germany in March 1985.

Trotnow said the museum has close relationships with the U.S. Army and Air Force in Europe, allied military history offices and the Freie Universität Berlin (Free University of Berlin).

The public can visit the museum’s permanent and temporary exhibitions at the Clayallee site, he said. Other artifacts, historic records and large items such as deactivated missiles, tanks and aircraft are in storage at the now-closed Tempelhof International Airport. Plans for building a larger permanent home for the museum at the ending point for the Berlin Airlift are being drafted.

“I am convinced that there is no other institution like this,” Trotnow said.

“History is important and it is not dangerous, and it is not just books and figures and boring stuff,” Trotnow said. “We believe that historical knowledge is necessary for a democratic society.”

More information about the Allied Museum and the Wall Patrol exhibit is available by clicking [here](#).



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