

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

WWII REENACTMENT IN WEST-CENTRAL WISCONSIN:
CONTEXT OF HISTORY AND MEMORY FROM THE LAST WORLD WAR

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Abstract

In 1978 the first official World War II historical reenactment took place in St. Louis, Missouri. The handful of pioneering men who dressed up in full WWII uniform, and armed with WWII era weaponry, began a hobby that would eventually rival the numbers of those who had been participating in Civil War reenactments since the mid 1960s. This paper traces the history of reenactment in general to set the historical time-line for WWII reenactment. History and memory plays an important role in understanding why reenactors choose to reenact WWII. The types of historical memory are described and WWII reenactment is fit into the context of how history is remembered. In addition, issues regarding the ownership and right to interpretation of history are also examined. The links are then drawn to show how WWII reenactment is a form of history and memory and how WWII benefits those who choose to remember our past.

Introduction

One of the easiest ways to experience history is to try to relive it. However, the past is not readily available to experience firsthand. Events that have come and gone are slowly buried by time and are mere fragments in the story of human history. Some last longer, some fade away faster.

This is true for all events, but there are ways to see and re-live the past. Historical reenactors make it possible for onlookers to experience an up-close and personal impression of life from times that have long since passed. This is also the case for those who prefer to witness battles of wars whose final shots have been fired decades and centuries ago. War reenactors can give onlookers a glimpse into the horror and trauma of war, while keeping the audience at a safe distance.

Without a doubt, one of the most popular forms of war reenacting is the rendition of World War II characters and battles. Since the first WWII reenactment took place in 1978, reenactments of the last world war have been taking place all across the world, especially in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Although the hobby of reenacting WWII has only really taken off in the last two decades, it now boasts tens of thousands of members worldwide.¹

My personal interest in World War II reenactment began while attending high school in central Wisconsin. A young man by the name of Tom Fasula introduced me to the hobby of reenacting. He frequently invited me to his home to show off his enormous collections of World War II memorabilia. His room was decorated with both Allied and Axis posters, toy models, and

¹ Jenny Thompson, *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors* (Smithsonian Books: Washington), 45.

various trinkets that dated to the 1940's. Fasula also showed me the most prized parts of his collection: the materials for his “impression,” a term coined by reenactors to describe their impersonation of a soldier.

A reenactor's most important goal is to provide an accurate impression of the character he or she is playing. This includes having the correct attire, accessories, and even impersonation in order to make the role-play seem as accurate as possible. Fasula's character was that of a German Army, or Wehrmacht, sniper from WWII. He had an authentic uniform, reproduction boots, and even an authentic KAR-98 sniper rifle, fitted with a scope from the era of course. I was simply astonished at what I was viewing. This young man had utterly transformed himself into someone else, someone from the past, all by changing his appearance and demeanor. I had been a World War II buff for years, but this was simply one of the most extraordinary things I had ever seen.

Fasula didn't know it at the time, but he had inspired me to learn about the world of reenactment from that moment. I continued to research the hobby and the people who participated in it. Over the course of a year, I attained my own attire and accessories so that I could participate in reenactment events. I was soon immersed into a world of camaraderie, authenticity, passion, and personal enjoyment.

Although the world of WWII reenactment is a rewarding fraternity to be a part of, there are several concerns that surround reenactors and their hobby. WWII reenactors dig up accounts of the past that to some may be hard to cope with. There is no doubt that war exposes the worst horrors known to mankind. Therefore, most people would prefer not to reminisce about war. However, reenactors still practice their hobby for their own enjoyment. The “ownership” of

history is also debated by those within the reenactment community and those who are spectators to the events that unfold on mock battlefields. The major question is, who has the right to portray historical events? Is it open to the public or is it to remain confined to those who participated in the events of their time and to the historians who actively research the events of the past?

In addition, questions regarding the interpretation of history are brought up within the reenactment community. The impressions that reenactors present are interpretations of, often, fictitious characters and are open to the reenactor's interpretation. However, there are often parameters that need to be observed within each private reenacting organization in order to provide authenticity. Outside of these parameters though, the impression is largely up to that of the impersonator or “impressionist.”

These two central issues also tie into the memory of past events and how they are remembered. How an event, such as a war, is remembered can affect the public view of the past and shape the historical interpretation of wars gone by. There are several ways that the past is remembered and commemorated. I thus sought to find out if WWII reenactment was a positive way to remember the bloody and tragic events of WWII.

Issues are not limited to the fresh wounds of the tragic events in the 20th century, however. Some of the same issues could be asked of the most popular type of reenactment: American Civil War reenactment. Since the early 1960's,² Civil War reenactment has been the most popular form of reenacting in the world.³ However, since the inception of WWII

2 Ibid, 30.

3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War_reenactment. I understand that wikipedia is not always the best source of accurate information, but since reenacting is a personal hobby that has a wide following, the most common source of information about it is from Internet sources. This includes wikipedia.org, which provides a

reenacting, many Civil War reenactors have joined the ranks of WWII era reenacting units. This was the case for Thomas Fasula, who originally portrayed a Civil War Confederate soldier.

In this paper I discuss the history of reenactment generally and World War II reenactment, specifically. However, the primary aim will be to show how World War II reenactment is an example of how WWII is remembered. It draws on the only synthetic work on the subject of World War II reenactment: Jenny Thompson's *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors*. I analyzed the questions that she brought up regarding the hobby and how WWII reenactment is used to remember WWII. To add to her work,⁴ I have conducted five interviews that allow me to contribute a small-scale representation of responses to some of the major issues within the reenactment community. These interviews, combined with the information gathered and compiled by Thompson, will allow me to explain how WWII reenactors attempt to keep the memory of WWII alive in the Chippewa Valley. WWII reenactment will also be placed into the broader context of history and memory. I will provide examples for how WWII reenactment has changed since its inception and will discuss the most important issues regarding the ownership and interpretation of history. Finally, I will explain how WWII reenactment fits into the different ways that WWII has been remembered and how WWII reenactment is a useful way to remember the past.

Overall, this paper will show that a variety of reasons exist for using WWII reenactment to remember the past. There are also several reasons for the surge in the popularity of WWII

public forum to allow people to look up information on any subject. This also holds true for reenacting, which utilizes the Internet to the fullest capacity.

4 Thompson's *War Games* was derived through a wide range of methods including over 300 questionnaires, interviews, correspondences, demographics, Web pages, event flyers, memorabilia magazines, and individual reenactor publications. I am adding to this synthetic work by providing my own interviews, geographically specific to West-Central Wisconsin.

reenactment in recent years. The growing popularity is attributed to increased memorabilia collection, WWII reenactment-specific publications, the advent of the Internet, better communication amongst organizations, and the surge in WWII media including films. This evidence was provided by the Screaming Weasels, a WWII reenactment group based in the Chippewa Valley of West-Central Wisconsin, via interviews in the spring of 2008.

There will be some limitations to my analysis, however. First of all, I am limited by my interviews. All of the interviews are with WWII reenactors from West-Central Wisconsin. There are only five of them, a small sample in comparison to the vast number of interviews done over the course of a decade by Thompson. Second, I will only be examining two issues within the hobby: ownership and interpretation. I will not be examining each criticism in great detail and thus will not be going too in depth regarding the realms of social, economic, or psychological fields. Third, I am limited by sources. Outside of the work by Thompson, and reviews of it, I could not find any other sources that discuss World War II reenactment at any level. Even in a broader sense, there is not much written on the history of reenactment. This makes it difficult to determine the precise history of the hobby, but there are several Internet sources that do offer some insights about the hobby's origins. This may limit my background information on the subject to an extent, but I still feel that my interviews and analysis will prove to be valid contributions to the history of World War II reenactment. Finally, the lack of an interview with a WWII veteran will narrow the scope of the research, but may not necessarily hinder it. I am sure that this would have provided another angle on how reenactors are perceived but it will not be a part of this particular analysis. Despite these limitations I will still provide the necessary summary of how the hobby has changed over time and will cite several reasons for the

metamorphosis of World War II reenactment.

Chapter 1

A History of Reenactment: Before and After 1978

There are several forms of historical reenactment. Historical reenactment can be simply defined as “a type of role play in which participants attempt to recreate some aspects of a historical event or period. It may be a narrowly-defined period, such as a specific war or other event, or it may be more broadly defined.”⁵ According to this definition, reenactment can be of any period or any historical event, including past wars, which is arguably, the most popular form.

Before 1978, the most popular form of historical reenactment was the American Civil War, which became popular in the early 1960s to commemorate its centennial. However, this was not the first historical reenactment to take place. Jenny Thompson, author of *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors*, does not touch upon the forms of reenactment outside of war reenacting, but there are other forms of reenactment that can be traced back as far as the days of the Roman Empire.

“Re-enactment as a concept is as old as civilization itself,” according to Howard Giles, who is considered Britain's most experienced historical event professional.⁶ “As part of their infamous public games, the Romans re-fought past victories in the Coliseum (unfortunately for the combatants, usually to the death), even flooding the arena to recreate a naval battle.”⁷ This

5 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_reenactment

6 http://www.eventplan.co.uk/about_eventplan.htm

7 Howard Giles, “Recreating the Past for Live Events, TV, and Film: A Brief History of Reenactment,”

type of public display of a past event could be considered a historical reenactment since one of the primary aims of reenactment is to provide a public display called “living history.”⁸ Living history, in turn, can be defined as “an activity that incorporates historical tools, activities and dress into an interactive presentation which seeks to give observers and participants a sense of stepping back in time.”⁹ Therefore, it is important that while tracing back the roots of historical reenactment, we consider those forms of living history outside of war reenactment.

Mock skirmishes became popular in the 17th century. These consisted of battle recreations on a small scale for the general public or for royalty. In 1635, the London Trained Bands demonstrated their fighting capabilities for King Charles I, and “In 1645, during the English Civil War, Parliamentarian troops chose Blackheath on which to re-stage one of their recent victories, although still actively at war with surviving Royalist forces.” In 1821, the Duke of Buckingham even staged Napoleonic naval battles on a lake on his personal property, for his own amusement. In 1840, young Lord Glasgow, a prominent governor of New Zealand from 1892 to 1897, organized a full medieval joust at Kelburn Castle in Scotland where all of the members had to be in full appropriate historical attire. This could be viewed as a precursor to modern Renaissance fair, another common form of living history and historical reenactment. In February of 1895, roughly one hundred members of the Gloucestershire Engineer Volunteers recreated the famous battle of the defense of Rorkes Drift in Natal. Seventy-five of the members were dressed as “Zulus” while the other twenty-five were dressed as redcoats. These sorts of “skirmish” events were not limited to the British Isles, however.¹⁰

http://www.eventplan.co.uk/history_of_reenactment.htm (accessed 24 February, 2008).

8 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_reenactment

9 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_history

10 Giles, “Recreating the Past”.

In 1876, even the surviving members of Custer's Last Stand at Little Big Horn were encouraged to go back to the battlefield and recreate the events of the battle for photographers.¹¹ During the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, organizations began to honor the fallen fathers and grandfathers of the Civil War's Confederate soldiers. The Sons of Union Veterans and Sons of Confederate Veterans were formed in 1881 and 1896, respectively, in order to care for veterans of the American Civil War. Other groups such as the Sons of Veterans Guards conducted mock military training in military clothing that resembled that of the modern soldier during this time period.¹²

Thompson notes, “Members looked upon their appropriated military roles as connecting them with the valued ideals of their forefathers, calling themselves ‘the modern embodiments of age-old traditions.’ And often, they worked to authenticate their legacy and to school themselves in the arms and equipment of real soldiers.”¹³ The fact that they rehearsed with their equipment in full military uniforms provides a glimpse into the modern Civil War reenactment, but a half-century before the first organized events that would become *known* as Civil War reenactment.

Also in America, the historical pageant had taken hold within American communities. The pageant is a type of performance related to reenactment. Thompson writes on the historical pageant:

Inspired by community leaders to promote awareness of local and national history, historical pageants were usually performed on holidays in outdoor settings. Drawing large crowds, the pageants were enacted by elaborately costumed amateur actors who re-created scenes from American history, such as Columbus Discovering America and the Signing of the Declaration of Independence. Pageant actors portrayed famous Americans as well as “common” individuals such as pioneers, pilgrims, Indians, and soldiers. And it

11 Ibid. It is important to note that it was not specified what Native American survivors, if any, participated in the recreated battle.

12 Thompson, *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors*, 34.

13 Ibid, 34.

was the veterans, along with their descendants, who were often cast to play soldiers in the various wars portrayed in pageants, including the American Revolution, the Indian Wars, the American Civil War, and, by the 1920's, World War I.¹⁴

Although viewed as a bridge between the events of the past and reality of the present, pageants rarely included any simulated violence. This is a stark difference from the modern war reenactments, but at the time the veteran-descendant groups wanted to represent war in a “generally heroic vision.” By the 1940s the pageants had faded out of existence in the United States. Performances of “living history,” a term coined by historian Carl Becker in 1931, began to take over in mainstream America. “Living history” sites began to be institutionalized at places like Colonial Williamsburg (1926), Greenfield Village (1929), and later, Plymouth Plantation (1947). These permanent “stages” offered the general public an opportunity to take a step back in time and interact with actors portraying common historic characters.¹⁵

In the 1920s and 1930s the Royal Tournament, Aldershot Tattoo¹⁶, and other similar British shows often recreated events from earlier eras, sometimes on an epic scale in front of delighted crowds.¹⁷ The 1934 Aldershot Tattoo recreated the Siege of Namur¹⁸ in 1865, for which hundreds of uniforms were produced to provide visual historical accuracy. Back in the United States, the numbers of Civil War veterans dwindled and the collecting of Civil War memorabilia started to become a profitable enterprise. In 1933 the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association (NMLRA) formed “as a competitive shooting group whose members used Civil War weapons.” NMLRA members began to appear at competitions in full Civil War dress

14 Ibid, 34-35.

15 Ibid, 36.

16 The Aldershot (Military) Tattoo was an international event held in Aldershot, Hampshire, England every year from 1922 to 1939. The Aldershot Tattoo was used to display the capabilities of all the branches of the British service and included historical re-creation events.

17 Howard Giles, “Recreating the Past for Live Events, TV, and Film: A Brief History of Reenactment”.

18 The Siege of Namur took place in the Belgium city of Namur.

and equipment, which was followed by the incorporation of “re-creating military tactics, uniforms, and camp life of soldiers. . .” This series of actions was then elevated to mass organization of units, where reenactors would organize to create encampments and perform battle tactics over the course of an entire weekend, all while pretending to be Civil War soldiers.

The first official Civil War “skirmish” was held in Berwyn, Maryland in May 1950.¹⁹ It was coordinated by Civil War veteran descendants who formed the North-South Skirmish Association (N-SSA) which organized more events throughout the 1950s.²⁰ However, it was not until July, 1961 that the hobby of reenactment garnered the attention of the general public. The centennial of the Battle of First Manassas (Bull Run) brought parades, lectures, fairs, and a modern “sham battle” to the actual site of the battle in Virginia.²¹ An estimated 70,000 spectators witnessed the “staged battle” between 2,000 reenactors who attempted to re-create the events of the July 1861 battle. The reenactment, titled the “Third Battle of Manassas,” gained more negative criticism than praise, however. It was labeled by members of the press as a “grisly pantomime” and “silly business.”²² Thompson included this quote from an editorial in the *Washington Post*:

The gaudy show at Bull Run was a noisy piece of amateur theatrics, carried on by overgrown boys who get a thrill out of hearing guns go off. It was a play acting at about the ten year old level. Bang, you're dead.

The critics of the first Civil War reenactments eventually won, and at the final centennial event, there was no reenactment of the surrender at Appomattox. Despite the rejection of Civil War reenactment by the mainstream media during the centennial events of the 1960's, Civil War

19 Thompson, *War Games: Inside the World of 20th Century War Reenactors*, 36.

20 Ibid, 37.

21 Ibid, 30.

22 Ibid, 31.

reenactment continued to expand its overall membership and Revolutionary War reenactments were organized to commemorate the bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976.²³

In the United Kingdom, groups such as The Sealed Knot and The Sabre Society began to recreate the English Civil War and the Napoleonic Wars in the late 1960's and 1970's.²⁴ It was also at this time that World War I and World War II reenactment began to occur. According to Thompson, "Full scale World War II reenacting was partly spurred by the activities of World War II veterans and collectors of World War II militaria."²⁵ In 1951, several people founded the Confederate Air Force, an organization founded to preserve World War II aircraft. This was followed by the collection of World War II era vehicles, which led to the formation of the Military Vehicle Collector Club in 1976.²⁶

Although the time and location has been disputed, the first official World War II reenactment was held in 1978 at the Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri, by the founding members of what would become the World War II Historical Reenactment Society (HRS).²⁷ In September of that year, the first World War I reenactment was also held. Thirty-five people hosted a reenactment event at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmetsburg, Maryland, using land acquired from the university to dig trenches for the mock battles. In 1979, Mount St. Mary's College requested that the reenactors stop using the land after which they moved to a farm in Shimpstown, Pennsylvania, where they were allowed to dig trenches, create pill boxes or concrete fortifications, and machine-gun nests. The California Historical Group (CHG) also

23 Ibid, 33.

24 Howard Giles, "Recreating the Past for Live Events, TV, and Film: A Brief History of Reenactment".

25 Thompson, *War Games*, 44.

26 Ibid, 45.

27 Ibid. Some reenactors claim that World War II reenactments had been held as early as the late 1960's in America. Thompson presents reenactor Walter Tannen, who claims to have reenacted World War II with other members of the N-SSA in the late 1960's. However, Tannen agreed that the hobby didn't really take off until the 1970's. He claimed that as early as 1976, three hundred reenactors would convene at Fort Meade, Maryland for a battle.

formed in 1979 as a World War II reenacting organization.

The HRS claimed 407 total members in 1980, and grew to over 1,200 a few years later, when reenactments were being held in Texas, Ohio, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. In 1982, several HRS members left the organization to form the National World War II Historical Reenactment Federation, which became known simply as “the Federation.”²⁸ This split led to the regionalism of the hobby seen during the 1980's and 1990's. This similar schism did not occur in World War I reenactment until after 1990, however.²⁹ Also in the 1980's, Vietnam reenactments began to take place of which Thompson notes that, “reenactors began to convene for private Vietnam tactical events, drawing much attention to themselves among other reenactors for reenacting such a recent and controversial war.”³⁰

The 1990s brought more change to the reenacting hobby. Although Western Front battles were the most popular form of World War II reenactment, Eastern Front battles began to take place partly due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.³¹ In 1990, the Shimpstown, Pennsylvania site for World War I reenactment was lost due to the inability to come up with the money necessary to buy the site from the original farm owner's son.³² Unable to come up with the money, the reenactors scrambled to find another location. In 1995, the World War I reenactors located a plot of land in Pennsylvania which officially became known as the Caesar Krauss Great

28 Ibid, 45.

29 Ibid, 41. The lack of regionalism was due to two of the founding members of the hobby taking over all events and actions of membership according to Thompson. These two members became known as the “Benevolent Dictatorship” to those who reenacted World War I in the 1980's. In 1989, the “Benevolent Dictatorship” was peacefully overthrown and the new Great War Association was founded.

30 Ibid, 46.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid, 42. The original owner suffered a stroke in 1990 and his son demanded that if the reenactors were to continue they had to purchase the land outright.

War Memorial Site (more commonly known as “Newville”).³³ The site's owner decided to lease the 153 acre plot to the GWA for its reenactments, and the first event held at the new location took place in April, 1996. Also in the 1990s Korean War reenactments began to occur, although most were organized at living history events for the general public.

Although the hobby of WWII reenactment has its roots in mock skirmishes, living history displays, pageants, and “staged battles,” its membership has grown to the point where it is hard to ignore. A simple look at the “units” page at WWII Historical Re-enactment Society, Inc's website speaks to the scale of the involvement within the hobby. The units included are American, British, Russian, German, Polish, and Italian.³⁴ As of March 2008, there were 90 groups listed on the website as viable and presumably active members of the organization. There is no doubt that the hobby of World War II reenactment has changed drastically since its inception in 1978, but the biggest questions are “why has it changed?” and “how does WWII reenactment relate to how WWII is remembered?” The rest of the paper will shed light on both questions using interviews with the Screaming Weasels of the Chippewa Valley in West-Central Wisconsin.

Chapter 2

Remembering the Past: History and Memory

In order to fully understand WWII reenactment and get to the heart of why reenactors

33 Ibid, 43. The site was owned by a grandson of Ceasar Krauss, an American 79th Division veteran of World War I. According to Thompson, he formed the Great War Historical Society.

34 <http://www.worldwartwohrs.org/Units.htm>

choose to reenact the past, it is important to understand how history is remembered. Memory of an event can have a profound effect on how history is recorded and instilled in society.

Historical memory can also influence the acceptance of traumatic events including wars. The relationship between history and memory of a historical event is a common theme that defines WWII reenactment. In this chapter I will summarize several ways that history is remembered and discuss how history and memory directly relates to WWII reenactment and the preservation of past events.

War memorials serve tangible purposes in commemorating and mourning the tragic events of past wars. Jay Winter discusses the purposes of war memorials in remembering and grieving the events of WWI in his book *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*. War memorials erected after the end of WWI are dotted across the landscape of Europe according to Winter.

Winter explained:

War memorials were places where people grieved, both individually and collectively. The ways they did so have never been fully documented. For anyone living in Europe, these 'documents' are part of the landscape. To find them one must simply look around. The still visible signs of this moment of collective bereavement are the objects, both useful and decorative, both mundane and sacred, placed in market squares, crossroads, churchyards, and on or near public buildings after 1914. Some were built during the war, mostly in the decade following the Armistice. They have a life history, and like other monuments have both shed meanings and taken on new significance in subsequent years.³⁵

According to Winter, war memorials are used to not only remember and commemorate the location and history of a battle, but are also utilized by participants and witnesses to cope with the memory of war. The memorials also serve to revitalize the memories of fallen countrymen

35 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 79.

who lost their lives in battle.³⁶

History can also be recalled via oral accounts of past events. Oral history can be an effective way to describe the past and recover memories about war as well. This was also the method that I used to collect the primary source data for explaining changes and issues in WWII reenactment.

Although oral history can be an effective way to recall events first-hand from those who experienced them, there are several factors that must be considered when conducting oral history to make it as effective as possible. Barbara Allen and William L. Montell presented eight aspects of oral history that need to be considered when analyzing the events recalled by an oral history participant in their book *From Memory to History: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research*.

The first of these is to accept the disregard for standard chronology. Instead of using historical chronology with accurate dates and times, oral history participants often describe events by “association with other episodes in an individual's life.”³⁷ Second, the ordering principal of events is often associated with emotional attachment. Next, a researcher has to understand that clustering oral accounts can be an effective way of analyzing an event from different points of view. The fourth important aspect of oral history is the reliance on visual imagery by a participant. Visual imagery can also compress the memory of past events into emotionally powerful symbols.³⁸

The telescoping of historical time, or exclusion of intervening occurrences while

36 Ibid.

37 Barbara Allen and William L. Montell, *From History to Memory: Using Oral Sources in Local Historical Research* (Nashville, Tn.: The American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 27.

38 Ibid, 26-35.

describing a past event, is a common mistake of telling history and must be considered. Also, the displacement of original actors in an event can occur, meaning that the event itself, and not the participants, are made to be more important. The migration of dramatic narrative elements, or using excitement at certain points of a narrative, can all too often place emphasis on certain events for the person giving the oral history. Finally, the patterning of oral accounts can affect the narrative given. The patterning takes place when a participant only focuses on one aspect of a history and does not include other valid perspectives of a historical account.³⁹

All in all, there are several aspects of giving and recording oral history that must be given consideration. The memory of a participant can be greatly affected by a wide variety of circumstances. Oral history can still be utilized as an effective way to document history, but cannot be the only source for recording events because of the problems that oral history can present if not done correctly.

Patrick H. Hutton also contributed to the idea of memory being utilized in historiography. In his book, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hutton argues that history is an art of memory due to four distinct themes. The first theme was the mediation of history via two moments of memory; repetition and recollection.⁴⁰ According to Hutton, repetition and recollection have changed the understanding of history over time. “Repetition concerns the presence of the past,” Hutton proclaimed, and “Recollection concerns our present efforts to evoke the past.” When these two ideas of memory are combined in historiography, the historian achieves a better understanding of a past event.⁴¹

39 Ibid, 35-40.

40 Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1993), xx.

41 Ibid, xx-xxi.

The second of Hutton's themes was the role of literacy in recording the past. Hutton argued that although memories are “fluid, dynamic, and ever-changing in the repetitions of oral tradition,” literacy and script became strong places for memory and history to be kept alive. In this way, the history of an event was directly related to the memory and imagination of the individuals who experienced it. As a result, Hutton explained, “The point is that history as a memory problem concerns not only the recollection of images but also the modes of their representation.”⁴²

The third theme was that the “historicizing” of collective memory in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created the foundations for modern historical scholarship. Hutton argued that modern historiography had its origins in historicism, which was “based upon the proposition that humankind, having created its own experience, can re-create it.”⁴³ In other words, historicism called upon historians to re-create the historical imagination. Historicism was, therefore, a function of memory because imagination and memory contribute to how historical events are remembered and recorded.⁴⁴

The final theme linking history as an art of memory according to Hutton was that historiography has undergone several changes within the discipline regarding how history is analyzed. For example, Hutton explained that modern history often focused on the political angles of historical events while post-modern history tends to enlighten social and personal entities of historical events. Hutton also pointed out a problem with how history was commemorated. He suggested, “Ultimately, the problem of history is a problem of the politics of commemoration, that is, of identifying and inventorying those events, ideas, or personalities

42 Ibid, xxi-xxii.

43 Ibid, xxiii.

44 Ibid, xxii-xxiii.

chosen by the power brokers of an earlier age of remembrance.” In other words, history had been a function of the ability to record it; an ability that was often utilized only by the educated and literate.⁴⁵

All in all, Hutton suggested that there were several themes that make up the link between how events are remembered via memory and how they are recorded. Hutton best explained the link between history and memory at the end of the introduction of *History as an Art of Memory*. “Memory prompts our inquiries as historians, just as the search for that which has been forgotten focuses them. The past as it was experienced, not just the past as it has subsequently been used, is a moment of memory we should strive to recover.”⁴⁶

The next piece of literature I used to explain the link between history and memory is Martin Evans' and Ken Lunn's *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*. The authors attempt to explain ways that war in the twentieth century was remembered. They used oral testimonials, museums, monuments, and film as examples of how twentieth century warfare has been remembered, recalled, and recorded. The authors furthermore included specific examples of how each tool of historical memory was used.

The first tool for remembering history was the use of oral testimonials to tell the story of a past event. In *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, Evans and Lunn used the first-hand recollection of Bernice Archer to tell her story of being placed in a civilian internment camp in Hong Kong during WWII. The authors explained that although social pressures can form and shape memories, traumatic and personal events like being placed in captivity during a war can also provide profound effects on the human memory. These social situations are not limited to

45 Ibid, xxiv-xxv.

46 Ibid, xxv.

captivity, however. The memories of veterans after a war are also important to shaping the overall memory of war. The authors cite interviews with Irish veterans and their experiences following WWI. Several social issues such as wartime politics, unemployment, intimidation, and commemoration were all examples of how Irish veterans remembered their wartime (and post-war) experiences.⁴⁷

In addition, Evans and Lunn used examples of the rehabilitation process after a war as how the memories of veterans were shaped. The authors used the cases of French conscripts that were rehabilitating after the Algerian War in the middle of the twentieth century. Shifts in identity during the rehabilitation process directly contributed to how memories of war changed over time in the minds of veterans. The authors also exposed some of the changing attitudes of veterans expressed during wartime and after the end of hostilities.⁴⁸

Evans and Lunn contributed the importance of museums in attempting to recall and remember the past. The specific examples that Evans and Lunn used were two museum exhibits that commemorated the Blitz in London during WWII. The two featured exhibits were located at the “Blitz Experience” in the Imperial War Museum and the Winston Churchill/Britain at War Museum. The aim for both of these exhibits was to “attempt to represent the experience of the people's war rather than information about diplomatic or political maneuvering or military tactics in wartime. . .” In this way, the exhibits were used to show how normal citizens coped with the war happening around them on a daily basis.⁴⁹

Evans and Lunn then discussed the significance of memorials in remembering the past.

47 Martin Evans and Ken Lunn, *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 1997), 59-68.

48 Ibid, 73-83.

49 Ibid, 89.

They concluded that memorials serve several purposes. They best explained the relationship between the public and historical memory in their conclusion to their chapter about British WWI memorials:

The public usually had a say in what type of memorial they would prefer; they were certainly expected to contribute financially, and to take part in the unveiling ceremony. Without this sense of communal ownership the memorial would effectively be impotent. Public participation in the commemorative ritual was crucial, yet such participation was, to varying degrees, exploited by civic leaders and visiting dignitaries to emphasize the memorial's didactic capacity. Armistice Day ceremonies reinforced the meaning of memorials year by year, and as grieving waned the culture of honoring the dead and following their example of sacrifice persisted apace.⁵⁰

An interesting part of the quote above is the issue of the ownership of history is brought up.

Despite the authors' lack of depth into the topic about historical ownership, this is a topic that I will discuss later within in the paper.

The final aspect of history and memory analyzed in *War and Memory* is the use of film to remember wars of the twentieth century. The primary question asked in these chapters was what contribution did films make to popular memory? The authors concluded that “people clearly preferred and remembered films from the war period which resolved their anxieties on a *symbolic* level.” In other words, the films that had instilled the most memory recollection were the ones that had symbolic significance to the viewers who were active during wartime.⁵¹

The contributions made by Evans and Lunn were very helpful in understanding the different ways that memory effected history and vice versus. Whether it was via oral testimonials, memorials, museums, or films, memory and history are linked by the recollection of events that still are important to the general population. If the events of the past did not affect people on a personal level, one could argue the point of collecting history through memory and

50 Ibid, 139.

51 Ibid, 163-187.

converting it to tangible history that can be shared amongst the masses.

Overall, the base of literature about history and how it is remembered is very large and can encompass several disciplines including sociology, psychology, and communication studies. History and memory is importance to my research because I not only used oral histories and interviews to learn about how and why WWII reenactors commemorate and remember WWII and the brave men who fought and served in the numerous battles and campaigns.

Chapter 3

Interviews with the Screaming Weasels

In March 2008 I began to conduct interviews with members of a WWII reenactment group in the Chippewa Valley of West-Central Wisconsin.⁵² I first learned about the organization through a fellow UW-Eau Claire history major, and one of my subsequent interviewees, James Campbell, III. As I came to befriend Campbell, I learned that he was also involved in WWII reenactment through a Chippewa Valley based unit. The name of the group was called the Screaming Weasels, a reenactment unit that had been existence since 2003.⁵³

I conducted five interviews with some of the most involved members of the reenacting outfit. For the interviews I created a list of questions that I thought would be relevant to reenactors while attempting to provide information to either prove or disprove my thesis. The

52 See appendix for a map of the Chippewa Valley in West-Central Wisconsin.

53 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

questions that I asked of my interviewees ranged from simple questions about the lives of the participants to more in-depth questions regarding some of the more important issues within the hobby, which most notably included questions about the ownership of history and the right to historical interpretation.

The first interviews were with the father and son reenactment duo of James Campbell, III and his father, James Campbell, Jr.⁵⁴ The interview was held at their residence in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin on March 25th, 2008. James was a history major at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire until he graduated in December, 2007 and was working at the local Wal-Mart full-time at the time of the interview. James Campbell, Jr. had been working for the State of Wisconsin as a State Highway Patrol officer. The father and son duo began reenacting WWII in 2004 and have since attended numerous reenacting events.⁵⁵

The second interview for this project was with Tim Scobie, one of the commanding officers of the Screaming Weasels. Scobie was an attorney for Mason Shoes in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin and he invited me to his office on March 31st, 2008 to conduct the interview. Scobie's involvement in WWII reenactment began in 2003 when he purchased a WWII era half-track.⁵⁶ He and a fellow lawyer, Dave Raihle, bought the American 1941 M3 half-track with the hopes of restoring it to its original condition during WWII. Scobie began attending WWII reenactment events shortly thereafter when he was asked to use the half-track for tactical events.⁵⁷

The next interview for this project was with Thad Gegner, a trial lawyer living in Eau

54 During the interviews I refer to James Campbell, Jr. as Jim to avoid confusion of addressing his son accidentally.

55 James Campbell, Jr. and James Campbell, III, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 25 March 2008.

56 A half-track is a military vehicle that has the front wheel steering of a car, but has caterpillar tracks on the rear. This allows the half-track to be versatile in almost any terrain since it combines the maneuverability of a car with the ruggedness of a tank. Half-tracks during WWII were used primarily to move troops, artillery, and supplies.

57 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

Claire, Wisconsin who had been reenacting with the Screaming Weasels since 2006. Gegner began reenacting when he met Tim Scobie and Steve Gibbs, fellow lawyers who reenacted WWII. Since Gegner had been a WWII militaria and memorabilia collector since he was a boy, he had known about WWII reenactment prior to his actual involvement. Since joining the Screaming Weasels, Gegner had participated in approximately thirty WWII reenactment events.⁵⁸

The final interview with members of the Screaming Weasels was with Dave Raihle, the commanding officer of the reenactment unit. Raihle had been serving as a Colonel in the Wisconsin National Guard and as a lawyer in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin at the time of the interview. Raihle, who had been reenacting WWII since attending law school in 1987, began reenacting with the Screaming Weasels in 2003 after purchasing the M3 half-track with Tim Scobie. He had been to about ten to fifteen structured events since joining the Screaming Weasels through the time of the interview.⁵⁹

All in all, these five members of a fairly young reenactment group in the Chippewa Valley provided me with enough information to gain some insight of WWII reenactment in the Chippewa Valley. In the final three chapters, I will use these interviews to explain the history and trends witnessed by the reenacting participants and how they relate to WWII reenactment as a hobby. This will be followed by an analysis of some of the major issues within WWII reenactment and, finally, how these issues control and contribute to the memory of WWII.

58 Thad Gegner, interview by author, tape recording, Eau Claire, WI, 2 April 2008.

59 Dave Raihle, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 11 April 2008.

Chapter 4

An Ever-Changing Hobby

According to the members of the Screaming Weasels, the hobby of WWII reenactment has undergone several changes since its inception in 1978. These changes have been witnessed on both the global and local scales within the reenactment community. There have been several trends that have affected the number of participants and public popularity over time. These have included increased memorabilia collection, WWII reenactment-specific publications, the advent of the Internet, better communication amongst organizations, and the surge in WWII media.

Increases in the amount of WWII memorabilia collection among reenactors and the general public have changed the popularity of the hobby. The idea of memorabilia controlling the popularity in WWII reenactment is simple. If there is a large amount of memorabilia and collector items available, they can be used. This includes actual WWII era material and reproduction material that was manufactured to imitate actual pieces of WWII era memorabilia. Many of the reenactors get their materials for their impressions from militaria/memorabilia shows, gun shows, auctions, and reenactment events where vendors are popular and willing to sell both actual WWII material and reproduction material.⁶⁰

The amount of memorabilia available has also controlled the membership in WWII reenactment. After WWII much of the war material was cheap to purchase because the United States military had a lot of it left over. This allowed memorabilia collectors to buy WWII era materials like clothing and weaponry in bulk and at a relatively cheap price. As a result, many reenactors were able to attain the materials for their impressions at low cost. However, as time

⁶⁰ Ibid.

passed the material began to get harder to attain and the value consequently went up. Tim Scobie gained much of his material as a child when the prices were “horribly cheap.”⁶¹ However, now it can cost someone “6 to 7 hundred bucks” to create an accurate impression from scratch without weapons. “Realistically speaking it would cost about two thousand dollars to do it,”⁶² with all clothing, weaponry, and equipment included.

The number of WWII reenactment publications has also controlled the membership in the WWII reenactment community over time. Internet sources are numerous and hard copy publications are available. Hard copy publications include militia collectors guides, like *G.I.*⁶³ and *The World War II G.I.*⁶⁴, which provide detailed descriptions of WWII era clothing and equipment. These publications give the reenactors ideas of the WWII era material to search for in order to create accurate impressions. Both internet and hard copy sources provide the reenactors with enough material to make their impressions accurate and authentic.

Without a doubt, one of the most significant changes in WWII reenactment involves the advent of the internet. The internet has allowed for better organization and communication amongst WWII reenactment groups and has made organizing events fast and effective. Tim Scobie explained, “Email makes it (organization) absolutely flawless. There's a web-ring out there, military reenactors, I don't even know what the website is, WWIIreenactors.com or something like that.”⁶⁵ Scobie uses the internet to get the word out about his group and communicate with members regularly. The internet has also made it easier to get WWII material

61 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

62 Ibid.

63 Henri-Paul Enjames, *Government Issue: U.S. Army European Theater of Operations Collector's Guide* (Historie and Collections, 2004).

64 Richard Windrow and Tim Hawkins, *The World War II G.I.: US Army Uniforms 1941-45 in Color Photographs*. (Great Britain: The Crowood Press, 1999).

65 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

for impressions via online sources like ebay.com and reenactor.net. According to James Campbell, Jr. “It (the internet) makes it easier to communicate with people, it makes it easier to find the equipment you want to use, it makes it easier to find out where the events are going to be.”⁶⁶

Finally, WWII media (specifically film) has also affected the number of people who reenact WWII. When popular Hollywood films like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers* are released, people reconnect with the WWII era because they are able to see it in “live action.” Film is also a way to recall the memories of WWII, as cited by Evans and Lunn in Chapter 2. According to Thad Gegner, film has had a great influence on WWII reenactment in the last ten years.

I think popular imagery has a lot to do with it. Very much so. Like I said the two biggest images we've had for WWII in the last ten years have been *Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers*. And when something like that comes out, remember how, go back to '94⁶⁷ or was it '93 when that cheesy movie Titanic came out, and like everything was 'Titanic', 'Titanic', and everyone's all the sudden interested in it, you know? Even though the thing had been sunk for eighty-two years. So, you know, there is a huge surge of interest and activity when you get stuff like that, you know? I think that those were probably the two (*Saving Private Ryan* and *Band of Brothers*) biggest, you know, things towards helping people understanding our hobby, or join our hobby, or express interest in our hobby.⁶⁸

Gegner made it quite clear that there was a link between imagery, memory, and film and WWII reenactment. The growing popularity, according to Gegner, had in part been attributed to the recent popularity of such films.

Overall, these changes in the amounts of WWII memorabilia collections, reenactment publications, and films have directly caused the popularity of WWII reenactment to grow. In

66 James Campbell, Jr. and James Campbell, III, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 25 March 2008.

67 It is important to note that Titanic was released in 1997, not 1993 or 1994 as Thad Gegner recalled.

68 Thad Gegner, interview by author, tape recording, Eau Claire, WI, 2 April 2008.

addition, the advent of the internet served as a way for reenactors to communicate, advertise, and organize with other reenactment groups. As a result of these four factors, WWII reenactment today boasts larger numbers, more interest, and better organization than ever before.

Chapter 5

Issues within Reenactment

Although it can be argued that WWII reenactment can have particular benefits like preserving the memory of WWII, there are many issues regarding the WWII reenactment hobby. Two major issues concern the ownership of history and the right to historical interpretation. During my interviews, I asked the subjects several questions about these important issues in the world of reenactment. The results varied, but it was evident that the reenactors themselves had given previous thought to these issues.

The issue over the ownership of history is very important for reenactors. It becomes an issue for WWII reenactors because reenactors are interpreting historical events and are re-creating them. “Outsiders” of reenactment may feel that reenacting events is unethical because they do not have the right to own history and interpret it as they wish, which could be linked to a lack of expertise in the discipline of history. According to reenactors however, it is important to maintain as much authenticity as possible for their reenactments. One of the primary goals is to present accurate representations of what WWII battles were like and make them available for the public to witness.

Thad Gegner believes that the people who are the best informed are the ones who have

the right to interpret historical events. He did not say whether it was exclusive or all inclusive, but rather suggested that WWII reenactors could be considered historians because of their obsession with attempting to maintain high levels of authenticity and accuracy in their portrayals of WWII.⁶⁹ James Campbell, Jr. believes that reenactors provide their own interpretations, but they do not always correspond to a level of expertise. Campbell, Jr. did acknowledge, however, that WWII reenactors could be considered as historians because of their ability to research the past and research the equipment that they use while reenacting.⁷⁰ In addition, James Campbell, III believed that WWII reenactors are historians to an extent because although they are not complete experts in history, WWII reenactors “are actually experiencing it (life in the field during WWII) in some respects; when we are at events we live like they did.”⁷¹

Tim Scobie commented on the subject of historical ownership and interpretation by saying, “I would never say anybody didn't have the right to interpret something. I may disagree with it, but certainly the people that were there have the right to do it and certainly the people that are suffering the consequences have the right to do it. And certainly the people who need to learn from it, who is everybody else, needs to be able to do that.”⁷² Scobie does not think that ownership and interpretation required any special accolades because history is open to anyone who wishes to study it.⁷³

Dave Raihle has another opinion on right to historical ownership and interpretation.

Raihle claimed:

69 Ibid.

70 James Campbell, Jr. and James Campbell, III, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 25 March 2008.

71 Ibid.

72 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

73 Ibid.

Anybody is entitled to evaluate and analyze the past. How significant or relevant their analysis is, I think, dependent on what they've done in preparation for their analysis. As a historian you have to look at the social, you have to look at the political, the economic. Not too many people look at history as an event and they don't study it in the context of what was going on at that time. To look ahead from our prospective and make judgments and analysis from the things we're living today and pulls it out of the past I think gives you a very shallow and distorted view of history. I think anybody is free to interpret it and I think that's one of the things that attracted me to reenacting is that most of the people I am involved with in reenacting are students of history. To what degree, you know do they have a degree in it? No, but do they read about it, inform themselves, do they educate themselves? Do they try to be faithful to the true history of it? Yeah, I think they do. Do they want to have some fun too and go out and screw around? Yeah, they want to do that too. But to answer your question, I think that anybody can do it. How valid or relevant their interpretation is, I think is, based on what they've done to prepare themselves for that analysis; what goes into it.⁷⁴

Raihle also considers WWII reenactors to be historians because “most of them really make a concerted effort to be true and faithful to what went before.” Raihle believes that it was because of the reenactors' attention to detail and right to interpretation (of which everyone has), that they have an equal stake in the ownership of history and can be considered historians at a level where a degree in history is not required.⁷⁵

Overall, the interviewees for this project provided some interesting insights into the two major issues regarding the ownership and interpretation of history and WWII in particular. Interestingly enough, not one of the interviewees had a negative experience with the public about reenacting WWII. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the responses to the reenactors given by the general public were very positive in nature. Chapter 6 of this paper goes into more detail about the public reaction and links between WWII reenactment and remembering the last world war.

74 Dave Raihle, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 11 April 2008.

75 Ibid.

Chapter 6

WWII Reenactment and Memory

WWII reenactment is directly related to the memory of WWII because most reenactors choose to pursue their interest in order to preserve the memory of those who fought in WWII. Although my interviewees had several opinions about how reenacting preserves the memory of WWII, they all agree that WWII reenactment is a tool that is used to positively reinforce the events of the past. This chapter will summarize the links between WWII reenactment and how WWII is remembered, as well as present the purposes for which WWII reenactors choose to re-create the battles of the last world war.

In the second chapter, I presented some of the ways that scholars categorized and linked history to memory. During my interviews, I asked all of the participants why they reenacted and one of the most common answers was to preserve the memory of WWII and keep it alive today. Thus, I argue that WWII reenactment is a way to remember the past and that its purpose could be pooled together with the formal entities of history and memory including oral history, monuments, museums, and film.

The primary pieces of evidence that I possess, to explain WWII reenactment's place as a form of history and memory, are via the interviews with the Screaming Weasels. James Campbell, Jr. believes that the primary purpose of reenactment is to make the public aware of what used to happen during the era of interest and personally teach history and learn more about it at the same time. James Campbell, III believes that reenacting benefits the public because “they get an educational experience watching it. They get to see what it was like and learn

something from it, probably.”⁷⁶

Thad Gegner explains the role of reenactment is “Number one, to have fun and to have fun in something you have a genuine passion in.” Gegner continued by describing who WWII reenactment benefits:

Everybody. The reenactors have a great time. The people who go, you know, the person with the casual interest, the spectator, it's good for them too because they get to see living history which they never would have seen. You know? One of these guys, some of these people, may have caught an episode of *Band of Brothers*, so they have a fake, vague idea of what an army camp looks like; tents, you know? But, they've never looked inside a tent, you know? What's that? What's this? So they get to see stuff they've never would have seen. And when you talk to a casual person, a person with a casual interest and talk to them about something, they'll really get into it.

Gegner perceives that opening the WWII reenactment experience up to the public not only allowed people to see and touch the equipment, but to also consider what it was like to live during wartime in the 1940's.

Some of the sentiments shared by Thad Gegner were shared by Tim Scobie, who believes that:

The best part, from a philosophical standpoint is that I am teaching kids to appreciate their heritage. I'm giving people the opportunity to have as much tactile interaction as possible. Feel the stuff that their grandfathers dealt with, or their fathers dealt with, or that their great grandfathers dealt with. To run their fingers along the side of a half-track or a Sherman tank, knowing that that quarter-inch of steel was all that protected their great grandfather from some explosion that happened in 1943. To preserve for the coming generations a part of a time capsule in history, I think gives me great satisfaction from a philosophical standpoint. I'm a true believer that if you don't understand history you are meant to repeat it. That's not just a cliché.⁷⁷

Scobie thoroughly believed that reenactors are preserving the memory of the past for future generations and are providing an experience that is as close to real as it could get without having lived through WWII.

76 James Campbell, Jr. and James Campbell, III, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 25 March 2008.

77 Tim Scobie, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 31 March 2008.

The final perspective gathered on the purpose of WWII reenactment was given by Dave Raihle. Raihle thought that the primary goal of reenactment was to keep the memory of WWII alive. When asked who reenacting benefits, Raihle replied:

I think outside of the selfish benefits that our organizations and groups derive from the enjoyment of like-minded people getting together, and most of us are history buffs and like history, I think that the public and society, at large, benefits from remembering. Reenactors may get together and talk about their uniforms or how accurate they are, things of that nature, but we also help to keep the memory of what was probably one of the most significant wars in our country's history alive. And not that the war was significant, but the contributions that everyone made to it. When you go out to one of these WWII reenactments and you see the amount of memorabilia that is lay out there and how our country devoted itself 100% to an effort. We haven't seen an effort like that in our country since then. Nothing has galvanized, well maybe 9/11 did for a brief period of time, but that faded very quickly in comparison to WWII. You're looking at everything from the cigarettes with the war logo on it to foot powder. Everything just converted its effort to support that. And so, that was a special time, not that the war was special, the loss was tragic and the lessons that we learned, or I hope we learned from that were significant. But the fact that our county could pull together and galvanize was excellent.⁷⁸

Most of these interviews provided me with substantial evidence to consider WWII reenactment as a way to remember history. One of the primary themes that I noticed while conducting these interviews was the importance to the reenactors to educate and revitalize the memory of a time in our world's history that has now been settled almost 63 years ago. I would like to think that WWII reenactment fits with the ways history is remembered as discussed in Chapter 2 of this paper, but I also know that WWII reenactment is not only a way to recall the past, but to attempt to live it. This is a substantial element that separates reenactment from oral history, memorials, museums, and films.

78 Dave Raihle, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 11 April 2008.

Conclusion

In conclusion, history and memory have played an important role in understanding the reasons why people choose to reenact WWII. Some of the key themes brought to light by the interviews with the Screaming Weasels were memory, commemoration, and an unwillingness to let a controversial and important time in our history fade away into distant memory. Reenactors choose to reenact to preserve the memory of our forefathers who fought and died for our future. However, WWII reenactors also reenact to educate people about the horrors of war and the machines that were used to fight others in desperate times.

The history of WWII reenactment, although brief, has not gone unnoticed. As more reenactors join the ranks of reenacting organizations, they have begun to find a place in the historical records of living history. The hobby that now boasts over 10,000 participants has “quickly” become one of the most in-demand hobbies to join. As a result, many changes have occurred since the birth of formal WWII reenactment in 1978. Memorabilia and war material prices have climbed and it is getting to be harder and harder to locate authentic WWII era collections. In addition, the numbers of newer, younger recruits is declining due to financial hardships and the increasing costs of memorabilia collection. The war that was made up of “teenagers and twenty-something’s are being re-fought by guys in their thirties and forties.”⁷⁹ This has not stopped events from continuing to organize, however.

It is important to note that one thing that all of my interviews had in common was the significance of recalling and preserving the memory of WWII through reenactment. As a result, WWII reenactment is an adequate form of historical memory today. Just as oral histories,

79 Dave Raihle, interview by author, tape recording, Chippewa Falls, WI, 11 April 2008.

memorials, museums, and films recall the tragic events of WWII, reenactment recalls and educates about a time that has passed into social memory. Everything from displays with actual WWII war material to taking a ride in an American M3 half-track can not only preserve the memories of a generation that fought in the largest war in human history, but can also create new memories and experiences for generations to come. All of this, according to the WWII reenactment community, is in the hope that our past will not be forgotten and the lessons of the past will not go unnoticed.

Appendix I

List of organized historical reenactments

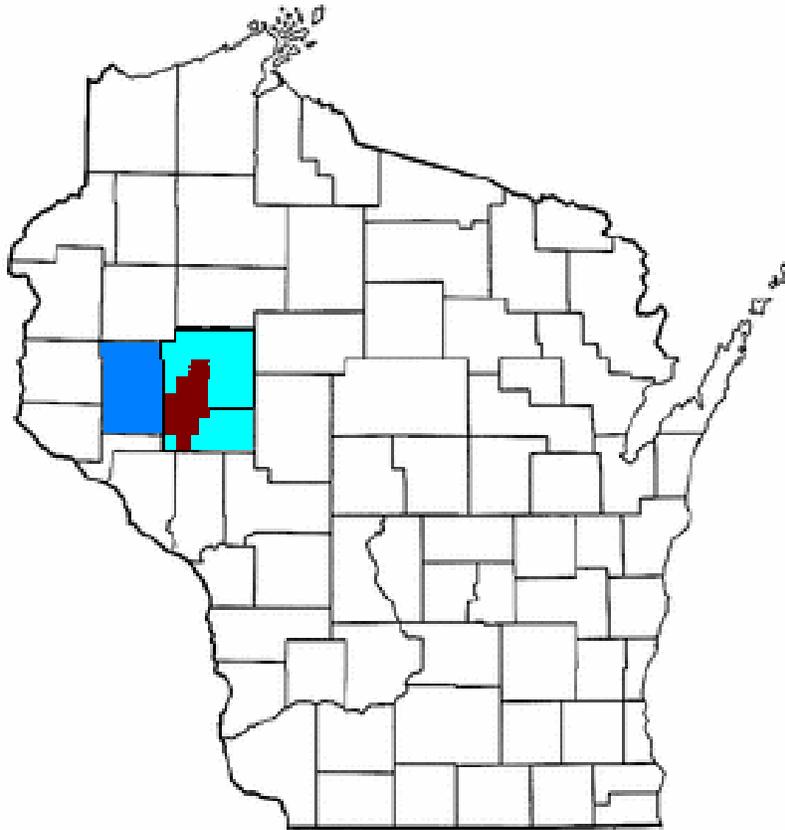
- Napoleonic Reenactment
- Ancient Reenactment
- Dark Ages Reenactment
- Early Medieval Reenactment
- High Medieval Reenactment
- Jousting Tournaments from the Middle Ages
- Burgundian Wars of Charles the Bold
- Renaissance Reenactment
- The Frontiersman Camping Fellowship
- The English Civil War
- The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its great wars
- The Fur Trade is reenacted by many in North America at events known as “Rendezvous.”
- The French and Indian War
- The American Revolutionary War
- The Reign of the Knights of St. John
- The English Regency
- War of 1812
- The Franco-Prussian War
- American Civil War reenactment
- Wild West themes and Cowboy action shooting
- The Crimean War
- Late Victorian
- World War I
- World War II
- Korean War Reenactment
- Vietnam War Reenactment
- Modern Reenactment

List Source:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reenactment>

Appendix II

Map of the Chippewa Valley in West-Central Wisconsin



- Areas in red are part of the Eau Claire – Chippewa Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization. Areas in light blue are those portions of Eau Claire and Chippewa County not included in the MPO. Adjacent Dunn County, which is included in the Eau Claire – Menomonie Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area, is shaded a darker blue.

Map and Caption Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Map_of_Wisconsin_highlighting_ECCF_Metro.png

Appendix III

CVMPA Reenactment Unit Rules



CVMPA Reenactment Unit Screaming Weasels

We have come up with a few rules for the CVMPA Reenactment Unit (Unit).
When you're hanging with a bunch of lawyers, would you expect anything less!?!

Unit Rules

1. CVMPA is a Wisconsin Limited Liability Company. As such, anyone *may* become an associate member of the LLC upon completion of the application process. Membership in the Unit however, **does not** mean you are an associate member of the LLC. For information on becoming an associate member of the LLC, see Lt. Raihle or Sgt. Scobie.
2. Although this is not a democracy, we vote on almost everything and every member has a vote.
3. New recruits come into the Unit as a Private regardless of rakish good looks, age, size, or prior military experience.
4. We have meetings. There are not many but get them on your calendar.
5. It's no big deal if you can't make a meeting or event, or you just have to leave early. It's common courtesy to let someone know however, so please do.
6. Anytime you are representing the Unit, regardless of time and place, you will adhere to all Unit rules/requirements and all applicable laws, courtesies, and safety rules. Failure to do so will lead to dismissal from the Unit, notwithstanding tenure or rank.
7. You must be able to "take orders" from "superior officers and NCOs." They won't be chicken-shit, we promise. If you have a problem with this, or have Oppositional Defiance Disorder, see the Rule directly below.
8. Most important rule – **HAVE FUN!** If you're not having fun, those around you probably won't be either.

Basic Requirements for Membership

1. Must be at least 18 years of age.
2. Must be willing to follow all Unit rules/requirements.
3. Must live within a reasonable distance of Chippewa Falls.
4. Must conform to Unit uniform/equipment, hair, dress and personal grooming standards as defined below.
5. Must be willing to make commitment of time and money to achieve the proper impression, attend events and help with up-keep of our Unit equipment/vehicles.
6. Must follow orders of all Unit Officers, ranking NCO's, Event Safety & Authenticity officials, and the local Gendarmes.
7. The Unit must be your PRIMARY reenacting unit.

8. Must attend a minimum of 1 event per year.

Recruit Probation/Promotion

All new members will be on probation for 6 months from date of sign-up. During this time, you will learn all Unit rules/requirements. Breach of any rules/requirements or safety rules may very well get you dismissed from the Unit. A simple member majority vote gets you this outcome. Probation may be extended upon a unanimous member vote and for good cause.

During the probationary period, you must work on the following to be promoted to PFC:

1. Must pass probation without incident.
2. Must view a video to be designated by the CO. (Wipe that smile off you face soldier!)
3. Must pass recognition test on U.S. and enemy uniforms, vehicles and aircraft.
4. Must attend a minimum of one event with the Unit.

Promotions & Rank

The CO may present promotions after consultation with and recommendation of the ranking Sergeant. A unanimous member vote can veto any promotion and can “bust” anyone down one grade. Even Private First Class (PFC) must be “earned”.

The initial rank structure is as follows:

1. Unit Leader (CO) 1st Lieutenant Raihle
2. Squad Sergeant Sergeant T. Scobie
3. Asst. Squad Leader Corporal R. Scarseth
4. T-5 Mechanic N. Sielaff
5. T-5 Medical J. Campbell
6. PFC J. Campbell, Jr.
7. PFC T. Gegner
8. Privates, PFC’s and Technical ranks will fill out the Unit

These members will be allowed to sew appropriate rank insignia onto their uniforms, and will be accorded the proper military respect that accompanies the position during all Unit activities. The Unit will provide 2 sets of rank chevrons to each member upon promotion. If you need more, you’re on your own. Rank decisions, for the most part, are based on a member’s ability to demonstrate a willingness to take on responsibilities. In order to wear the rank of a technician, you must demonstrate an additional interest in researching a specific role that a US Combat Engineer would have performed as a T-5, T-4, etc. A list of “jobs” that technicians performed will be garnered from the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E), which Lt. Raihle is compiling. Those wishing to portray a T/5 or T/4 will be expected to develop a presentation about their impression as a technician. Upon command, it may be required that a presentation be given to an audience at an event. Technicians are also strongly encouraged to collect gear and equipment that would be specific to their role (i.e. tools for a mechanic, medical items for medic, etc.) Remember, if you attend an event wearing unapproved rank insignia, you will be asked to remove it in order to participate.

Personal Grooming

Hair must conform to WWII standards. No beards may be worn and mustaches must be trimmed. Hair must also be trimmed to meet WWII standards. If in doubt what the standard is, please ask the CO or Squad Sgt. If you arrive for an event and are not appropriately groomed, you must fix it or go home, period! The others in the Unit may offer to “help” the offending member with a dry shave, buzz-cut or the like.

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

All equipment and uniform colors are OD (light colored Olive Drab) or Khaki – NO DARK GREEN should be used unless noted.

BASIC INFANTRY IMPRESSION* (First year or new member)

- M-1 Steel Helmet with stitched chinstrap and liner with leather chinstrap. (Converted Post War OK, but must be approved beforehand)
- M-1910 or M-1923 dismantled cartridge belt (Ammo belt)
- M-1910, M-1924 or M-1942 First Aid pouch
- M-1910 Aluminum Canteen, Cup and Carrier or Stainless Steel Canteen, Cup and Carrier
- Bayonet, M-1 Rifle with Scabbard (16 inch or 10 inch versions)
- I.D. tags (Dog tags) with Chains (must be WW II Style)
- Undershirt (O.D., Cotton Athletic V-Neck style or Tank-Top)
- M-1939 or M-1941 Enlisted mans O.D. Wool shirt and trousers
- Web belt for trousers, with blackened open-faced brass buckle
- Overseas cap with Engineer piping
- M-1943 Field Jacket (DARK OD, OK)
- M-1943 Trousers (DARK OD, OK)
- Boots
 - Rough-out Brown, Leather $\frac{3}{4}$ Service Shoes with composite rubber or leather soles and brown clothe flat laces and M-1938 Dismounted Canvas Leggings, OR
 - Rough-Out 2-Buckle Boots (original, reproduction or French Ranger boot)
- Period Eyeglasses (for those that wear glasses – No non-period frames)

IMPROVED INFANTRY IMPRESSION (Optional Uniforms & Equipment)*

- H.B.T. (Herring Bone Twill) M-1941 or M-1942 shirt and trousers
- Short-billed Utility cap or Daisy May cap (DARK OD, OK)
- M-1941/M-1942 Field Jacket
- Service Jacket (Class A) 4 pocket Wool jacket with Trousers (with or w/o "Sam Brown" brown Leather belt)
- Optional Class A jacket with Trousers – the Ike Jacket (WW II style)
- Dress Shoes (Brown Leather Oxford type shoe)
- M-1941 Russet $\frac{3}{4}$ Garrison Shoe
- Black Rubber/Canvas buckle overshoes
- Rubber, buckle overshoes (Galoshes shouldn't have more than 4 buckles)
- Boxer style cotton Under Shorts with 3 button fly and tape adjustments on left and right hip (White or OD, can be dark OD)
- Undershirt, tank top or V-neck (White or OD – no dark OD)
- M-1910 or M-1928 Haversack with meat can pouch and carrier
- M-1910 or M-1943 Entrenching tool (shovel) and carrier
- Gas Mask carrier, 3 snap late war version (dark O.D. OK)
- Enlisted Rain Coat. Ponchos (WW II style w/o hood) OK but very limited use requested (DARK OD, OK)
- Wool Helmet liner (Jeep Cap – Radar O'Shafer Hat)
- Leather palmed Wool Gloves
- Wool Scarf (can be cut from G.I. blankets)

- M-1938 Wool, Enlisted overcoat
- Wool G.I. Blanket
- M-3 Fighting Knife and leather or M8 fiber scabbard
- Ammunition bag (Grenade bag)
- Shelter half with 5 Pins, 1 set of Poles and a guy lines (Dark OD with buttons – no snaps)
- Pick Mattock and carrier
- Hand Axe and carrier
- Wire cutters and carrier
- Rifle Cleaning kit (Butt stock version or Squad kit)
- Angle Head Flashlight. (Converted post war OK)
- Duffle Bag
- Barracks Bag
- Ditty Bag
 - Shaving Kit (Safety Razor, Blades, Brush and Soap) with carrier
 - Shaving Mirror and case
 - Sewing Kit and Carrier
 - Aluminum soap dish (carrier) Tooth Brush
 - Foot Powder

****Unit CO or Ranking NCO must clear all impressions before an event.***

UNIFORM TYPES

Winter Service Uniform (Wool)

This uniform consisted of the OD wool garrison cap or overseas cap (displaying branch of service insignia or distinctive insignia) OD wool shirt and trousers w/cotton tie and hemmed, un-bloused trousers w/service shoes – NO LEGGINGS WERE WORN UNLESS:

- You were under Arms (armed with a weapon)
- On Campaign (in Combat)
- Or ordered to do so

This uniform would display (on the shirt) the following:

- Divisional and Army patches
- Rank patches

This Uniform may be supplemented with the following cold weather items:

- Wool overcoat
- Field Jacket (M-1941, M-1942)
- Raincoat
- Wool and leather gloves

**The Wool over coat and Field jacket should display the same items as the Service shirt (above)*

Winter Service Uniform (M-1943)

This uniform consisted of the “new” M43 Service Jacket and Trousers. It was commonly worn over the Wool Service Uniform in cold weather but could be worn alone when serving in the capacity of the Fatigue Uniform (see below). The M43 Jacket would display the same items as the above. This uniform did not see regular deployment

in the ETO until the late summer of 1944.

Winter Service Uniform, Class A or Dress.

This uniform would be the same as the Winter Service Uniform (above) except with the addition of the 4-pocket or Ike style (late war) Service Blouse, which would display the following items:

- National and Arm of Service Insignia discs - 1 ea
- Distinctive Insignia (Regimental Crests, late war) - 2 ea
- Divisional or Unit insignia (shoulder patch) – 1 ea
- Rank insignia – 2 ea. (Privates worn no rank insignia)
- Service and Oversea stripes
- Wound stripes
- Qualification Badges
- Campaign, Service and Award ribbons
- Awards

Winter Field (Campaign) Uniform.

This uniform would be worn the same as and display the same as the Winter Service Uniform except for the addition of cotton, khaki leggings and field equipment.

Summer Service Uniform.

This uniform would contain: cotton, khaki garrison or overseas cap, khaki service shirt w/tie and trousers. This uniform would be worn the same way as and would display the same insignia as the Winter Service Uniform above.

Summer Service Uniform, Class A or Dress.

This Uniform would be the same as the Summer Service Uniform except with the addition of cotton, khaki 4-pocket Service jacket. It would be worn the same as and display the same as the Winter Service Uniform.

Summer Field (Campaign) Uniform.

This would be the same as and display the same as the Summer Service Uniform with the addition of leggings and equipment.

Fatigue Uniform

This was an O.D. (blue denim in early war) heavy denim, cotton jacket and trousers or one-piece coverall. Commonly known as the Fatigues or HBTs. This uniform would be worn over the Winter Service Uniform or worn in place of the Summer Service Uniform while on work details, vehicle and equipment maintenance and training which could damage the Summer Service Uniform. Leggings were worn only when ordered. After 1941, this uniform was commonly adapted as a Summer Field (Campaign) Uniform and was commonly worn over the top of the Winter Field (Campaign) uniform in cold weather. NO patches or other items would be displayed on it, in other words “plain Jane.”

Classes of Uniforms

There are four classes of uniform; A, B, C, and D.

The **Class A uniform** consists of the Wool Trousers, OD wool or khaki cotton shirt, Mohair tie, OD wool 4-pocket or Ike service blouse, and the garrison or overseas cap (there are other names for the cap, but I'll keep it clean here). This uniform was worn in cool to cold weather. In the summer, all the wool was replaced with the khaki cotton items. The Class A uniform was worn for dress and parade.

Class B uniform is the same as above, except for the service blouse is deleted. It is important to note that the Field jacket can be worn with the class B uniform.

There is some confusion on the class C. Some Army manuals/periodicals refer to the **Class C as basically a Class B w/o the tie**. Others refer to the Class C as the Summer Garrison Uniform (the khaki version of the Class B) with a

tie. Either way, it is worn without leggings/combat boots

Class D uniform refers to the uniform that is worn in the field. For all practical purposes it is virtually the class B uniform; however leggings/combat boots, helmet/ liner or field head covering, and other field equipment are added. If you were under Patten, the tie was included.

WEAPONS AND MISC EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS

- .30 cal. M1, Garand, Gas Operated Service Rifle
- .30 cal. M1 Carbine (Reserved for Platoon and Squad Leaders)
- .30 cal. 1903/1903A1/1903A3) Springfield, Bolt Operated Service Rifle (Grenade launching adapter & Grenades or Sniper Rifle Variant of the 1903, 1 per Platoon)
- Hand Grenades (Period FR/HE/WP/SM)
- M1911A1 .45 cal. Pistol (Usually reserved for Platoon/Squad Leaders, Heavy Weapons and Vehicle crews, but could be private purchase item)
- .30 cal. Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR)
- .30 cal. 1919A4 Light Machine Gun
- .30 cal. M1919A6 Light Machine Gun
- .30 Cal M1917A1 Heavy Machine Gun
- 2.5-inch rocket launcher, Anti-Tank
- 60mm Mortar
- 81mm Mortar

MISC. EQUIPMENT

Ammunition carriers (Can include Wooden/Metal boxes/cans or Cloth Vests)

- .30 cal
- .50 cal
- 60mm
- 81mm
- 2.5 inch
- Hand Grenade

Signal Corps (Communications)

- EE-8-A Field Telephone (w/wire and reel)
- B.C. 1000 (Pack) Radio and Transmitter
- B.C. 611 (Hand) Radio and Transmitter
- SCR-284 Radio and Transmitter

BASIC UNIFORM, EQUIPMENT & WEAPONS CHECKLIST FOR RIFLEMAN REENACTING EVENTS

ESSENTIALS

- Membership Card(s) (CVMPA Reenactment Unit/ HRS, etc.)
- Your DL (no DL, no beer, see next item)
- At least \$50.00 cash (Lt. Raihle needs more as he always buys the first round)
- M-1 steel helmet with liner
- Weapon with blank adapter (duh!)
- Cartridge belt (At least 148 rounds of blank ammunition, BLANK!)
- First aid pouch
- Canteen, cup and carrier
- Bayonet/Scabbard

- I.D. tags (dog tags) with chain
- Undershirt/wear & socks
- Web belt for trousers
- Overseas cap
- M-1943 Field Jacket
- M-1943 Trousers
- Wool shirt and trousers
- Boots/leggings
- Period eyeglasses

RATIONS

- Two to three D, K or C- Rations (1 day) or a combination of all three. These can be supplemented with A & B Rations and locally obtained foodstuffs when available.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

1. Ditty bag w/contents
2. Service Shoe Polish, Dubbing (water/gas proofing)
3. ZIPPO type Cigarette lighter or wooden or period book matches
4. Period smokes (cigars or modern no filter Camels or Lucky Strike *It's toasted* are okay)
5. Period folding pocket knife (military or civilian jackknife)
6. Period Playing cards
7. Nic's & Tim's famous French beer!

BEDDING/SLEEPING EQUIPMENT

- OD wool blanket (2 work better than one, trust me)
- Wool sleeping bag w/cover
- Canvas folding cot (if necessary w/wood mosquito bar frame and net)
- Mattress cover, sheets and pillow cover (if your mom packed for you)

SHELTER

- V. Shelter half w/poles, ropes & stakes
- VI. GP/Command tent
- VII. Hotel reservation

WEAPONS RELATED

- Rifle cleaning kit
- Grenade launcher kit
- 2 to 5 Grenades (various types)

MISC. EQUIPMENT

- 5-foot section of hemp type or cotton (similar to cloths line) rope

COLD AND WET WEATHER

Wool overcoat
 GI sweater
 Wool helmet liner (you know, the Radar O'Shafer Hat)
 Rain coat or poncho
 GI galoshes
 GI gloves
 Extra GI socks (at least 1 pair)

WARM AND HUMID WEATHER

- Insect repellent
- Extra canteen, cup and cover
- Foot powder
- Deodorant (need not be GI for those of you who really sweat)

MISC. BIVOUAC EQUIPMENT

- Ditty Bag & contents
- M1941 Tent Stove
- Field Desk or table
- MX-290/GV Electric Lantern
- Gasoline Lantern

FIELD KITCHEN

- M1941 Mermite Can with Inserts
- M1944 Mermite Can with Inserts
- M1941 One Burner Stove
- M1942 One Burner Stove
- M1942 Two Burner Stove
- Lister Bag (suspended H2O drinking water container)

CVMP Reenactment Unit Rules Source:

Provided to author by Tim Scobie via email in April, 2008.

Appendix IV

Photo Gallery



James Campbell, III in era MP impression.



James Campbell, Jr. in WWII medic uniform.



Tim Scobie (right) and Dave Raihle in full WWII impressions.



Thad Gegner in his impression while tending to a .30 caliber machine gun on board a WWII era Sherman tank.

Photo Sources:

All photos provided by interviewees James Campbell, III., James Campbell, Jr., Tim Scobie, Thad Gegner, and Dave Raihle and sent to author via email in April, 2008.

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