

Colorado Hero
03-10-2014 -by Harry Zirkelbach

I have a library of choice books. Most were from The Heritage Club of New York City, books of lasting merit. Annually members were offered a dozen books.

Books were always attractive, hard cover, tightly bound, boxed, accompanied by a **Sandglass**, a four page review of book and author, the printing, paper, artists, preparation, the reason for selection. They remain my treasure. After some thirty years I ended membership. Not all had been read.

I intended to read each; still work on this.

Knowing my book interest, one or another of our children give me newly published books. Of course I read them.

This birthday, daughter Grace gave me, THE LIBERATOR, by Alex Kershaw. After a casual glance, I recognized this WW II tale is about a Colorado friend, man known and admired for other adventures.

In 2000 the Regis College History teacher, opened one class to the public. Four Veterans were asked to speak of their WWII experiences. One was a cousin. The others, an Air Corps Colonel, an Army LTCL, a private from Patton's Army. In brief, my cousin (unknown to any, in early Alzheimer) chose not to appear. The Air Corps Colonel words, not memorable.

The Patton private was Gene Amole, Rocky Mountain News writer. His tale, the complete misery of 1944-45 Patton's European winter warfare, imminent death, terror in the dying, the handsome dead boy never having made love to a woman. Cold, misery, duty.

The other speaker was Felix Sparks. As a young Colorado lawyer he had been appointed to the Colorado Supreme Court, resigned after a few years. Later Commander of the Colorado Guard. A national leader in Water Law. He had done everything well.

I was not aware of his WWII European military history.

That night he recounted, as Commander of the force that liberated Dachau, ordered to secure the facility, let no one enter until further orders. These young liberators had no idea what Dachau was. Seeing this horror, some of his troops began executing the captured German guards. Sparks stopped this.

A U.S. General arrived with Margret Brooke White, Life magazine photographer. Spark's would not let them enter. The General promised to have Sparks Court Marshaled for disobeying a superior Officer, left. A few weeks later the War ends.

Sparks takes a few of his Sergeants, drives to Le Harve France to ship home. In announcing his arrival, MPs tell him they have orders to take him back to 7th Army HTRS in Munich.

Sparks tell them "I'll return, but you are not going to take me.
I give you my word."

Now, the book review.

If you hate war, read this book.

If you believe war settles anything, you must read this tale of 2nd Lt Felix Sparks' days with the 45th Division, 157th Regiment from Fort Sill, Okla. Jan 1941, then the books 511 days into Africa, Italy, Germany.

Nine of ten men attached had been killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. The 45th Division's initial complement had been replaced seven times. In two battles, Lt Col Sparks the only survivor of his unit.

I would love to have a cameo role when this movie is made.