

# War Memorial Remembers Battle

By Ginny Dumond

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — Those lost in the most brutal air battle in history were remembered with tears as "Taps" was played, and this time in Schweinfurt, the Americans and Germans mourned together.

The first half of the memorial service, which took place June 16, was held at the St. Johannis Church in Schweinfurt. Along with the 50 Americans in attendance, more than 200 Germans gathered in the cathedral, many of them townspeople alongside the Luftwaffenhelfers and Flakhelfers.

Though the weather outside was cold and wet, the attitude inside was one of reconciliation. All minds were on the day of Oct. 14, 1943.

"Grant that all people on earth may respect and love each other and strive for progress, justice, and peace," came a line from the opening prayer.

"For me, and I believe also for all those who have not experienced war, it is important and necessary to remember," said Christild Grafe, senior minister of St. Johannis, in her address. "We remember the past, the fallen, and the dead, not so that new hatred grows, but as a warning that such suffering caused by a war may never happen again between our nations and others." Heibert Brander, former Luftwaffenhelfer and pastor of Domdekan Church in Wurzburg, had watched from the ground as the air battle that destroyed his city took place.

"We young students stood grimly and prepared our anti-aircraft guns," Brander said. "We wanted, of course, to defend our homes in which we knew were our families and loved ones."

He went on to describe the bombing of the town and 276 residents who lost their lives as well as the 60 Allied B-17s that were shot down.

"We are happy that one-time war enemies now are united in friendship," Brander said. A U.S. Army chaplain in Schweinfurt, John S. Parker, saw the symbolism of the memorial as a sign for years to come. "This service represents that brotherhood and peace can be a reality," he said. "It is a testimony to the future Americans and Germans that our peace is as strong as our oneness is strong."

After battling the rain for almost half an hour, the continuation of the ceremony, slated to take place in front of the monument, moved into the theatre of Schweinfurt. Georg

Schafer, former Flakhelfer and initiator of German interest in the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association, was 15 years old when called upon to defend his city.

"We do not intend to look back in anger today; rather, we would like to commemorate our lost relatives and friends in mourning," he said." Also, in a grateful spirit for the fact that we survived the absurd and murderous war."

Bud Klint, president of the SSMA and pioneer of the trip to Schweinfurt, piloted a B-17 during the air strike and said his fellow fighters had no idea of the damage done to the town.

"All of our group was appalled by the images of Schweinfurt after the war," he said. "We were told that First Schweinfurt had done minimal damage and that is why we continued to bomb."

George Glass, American consul general in Munich, called war "a defining event in human history," and said "Yes, we must never forget the trauma of war."

"It is therefore a truly memorable and, as far as I know, singular event that a considerable number of those who, as enemies, brought death and destruction to Schweinfurt during the attacks of Aug. 17 and Oct. 14, 1943, are with us here today," said Gudrn Greiser, lady mayor of Schweinfurt.

"They are standing side by side with those who in their turn inflicted heavy casualties on the Americans. We are witnessing today a clear testimony of people who were former enemies, who have long since become friends, a testimony to their sad and bitter past which they see as an admonition to a peaceful future."