

NAZI EXTERMINATION CAMP-By Bob Keith-Charleston was Bob's first reunion , but hopefully not his last.

Gerry Searle and I traveled through Lublin on our way to Odessa, Russia to catch a British ship going to Port Said, Egypt. Three (3)Km east of Lublin, Poland, we stumbled across Majdanek Extermination Camp. Lublin, on the main supply route for the Germans in their Russian campaign, was one of the first Polish cities captured. Majdanek (1941-1944) was originally established as a concentration camp under the Waffen SS and its first occupants were Russian POWs but the camp soon became a detention center for Jews. In April 1942, mass transports of Jews began arriving at Majdanek.

The Russians liberated Majdanek on July 24, 1944 -Gerry and I arrived there around the end of January or beginning of February, 1945. I took the following photos of the camp with the GI 35mm Kodak I recovered from Oflag 64.

We met Jane Walker, a British subject, in Lublin and traveled with her on box cars to Odessa, Russia where we boarded a British ship to Port Said, Egypt. My wife kept up a correspondence with Jane Walker who was living in Bexhill-on Sea, England, and in 1948, Jane visited us when I was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. There, we learned the fascinating story of her life.

Jane's father was Military Attached in Berlin prior to WWI and Jane was educated in Germany. During WWI she made 18 courier trips from Berlin to Switzerland for the British. Prior to WWI she worked for British Intelligence in South Africa (Boer War) and later in Palestine with General Glubb and Lawrence of Arabia. Prior to WWII, she was sent to Poland where she first learned Polish and when Britain entered the war against Germany, she worked with the Polish underground in acts of sabotage and in returning downed fliers back to Britain. She showed us a Polish newspaper photo of the results of the robbery of the German pay truck in Warsaw. Jane's roll was to drive a farm cart loaded with cabbages that had its wheel modified to come off. As the pay truck came down a narrow street, Jane drove the cart across blocking the road. The wheel came off, the cart fell on its axle, and cabbages spilled out over the street. The Poles jumped the truck ,and the Germans, and made off with the payroll. The photo showed Jane still in the street picking up her cabbages and the truck with the dead Germans draped all over it.

She received the MBE (Order of the British Empire for Merit), the highest award given to civilians. She also received an invitation and reserved seat to the coronation of Elizabeth 11.

Jane also appeared on the BBC show, This is Your Life. Jane died in 1962 a year after we visited her in her home at Bexhill-on-Sea, England. She was 84, nearly blind and hobbling from the after effects of a broken hip. A truly remarkable lady!

Jock Sutherland was also there!

I just sent some of my recollections to Bob Keith after seeing his Majdanek site. We met Jane on the city square in Lublin while listening to the public address speakers reporting on the Yalta Conference. She accosted us, visibly noting that we were allied personnel. She gave us the gist of what was being said on the speakers. She also put us in touch with some of the local cognoscenti who would give us a free lunch or two. My particular victim was a college professor who wished to try out his English language which he had taught himself from a book of a German Author. He asked me for my opinion of his diction, which I told him was German accented (naturally). Offended, this was the end of my luncheon invitation.

A group of us visited Bob Keith whilst he was in the hospital in Lublin. The Russian Doctors used a type of wooden spool stethoscope. We did not hold up much hope for his recovery in time to take the train to Odessa, but apparently he recovered enough to make it. Yes, the Brits decked Jane out in battle dress and dropped her from the train while it moved slowly through the railyards at Odessa. Jerry Sage has some account of this trip in his book.