

Wooden Ships; Iron Man

History of an Old Sailor



William G Mangan

Back when ships were wood with sails powered by wind, men were tough as iron. They sailed following the stars, ate dried food, lived spartan lives and endured rough seas. This is one man's adventures living in that world and more.

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By William G Mangan

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Preface

History is derived from many sources. Cave drawings, archeological findings, hieroglyphics, eyewitness accounts, auto biographies, piecing together events, forensic investigations, videotaping, voice recording, just to name a few. But basically, the keystone, the historic method comes from human verbal communication and discourse. Relating events through speech.

My maternal grandfather, Lorenz Anton Ludvig Laatz is not a historical figure. Basically, he would be considered a normal ordinary German-American immigrant who married an American citizen and raised five kids. But much of his life was far from ordinary. In fact, he traveled the world and had adventures that most folks only dream of or see in movies. And this was in the first thirty years of his life.

How do I know? Because I was the recipient of him telling about his adventures and life, and this, pieced together with other evidence forms a pretty good picture of his history. He had no reason to embellish the stories he related to me. He was matter of fact. He had an engineering mind and I never detected a big ego. I don't believe he transmitted this much information to anyone else. Somehow we had a connection and he felt comfortable telling me. He died when I was

seventeen, but I spent a lot of my life visiting him. He was my mentor and my hero.

The stories and adventures that form the meat of his history emulate from my personal memory as I recall him telling me. Therefore, it is undoubtedly not perfect, but I have a pretty good recollection and will do my best to relate accurately.

The stories he told me had no timeline, per se. They were told because of something that jarred his memory. It could have been a National Geographic magazine, a newspaper article, something on TV, or another source. Many times he would illustrate something in the story. He liked to draw and was pretty good at it. Sometimes it could be a memento that he had kept, such as a dagger that he acquired after a man tried to stab him. I still have that dagger.

But years later, when traveling to his home town in Germany, I obtained from relatives still living there, postcards that he sent home from whatever part of the world he was in. They gave these postcards to me. They are dated, and have a picture of his location as he traveled around the world. So I will try to match the stories with the timeline established by the postcards. He never gave a return address though. It turns out that one of the reasons for his departure at age eighteen was apparently to escape being drafted into Kaiser Wilhelm's Army! This is something I never knew until my visit. It seems he harbored some subsequent paranoia that haunted him:

could he be tracked down and punished for eluding service to his Kaiser?

Even when he finally married an American and established a family in Seattle, Washington State, his first child, my mother, was born in 1916, there was still some fear. Why? WW I was beginning and Germans living in the U.S.A. were sometimes eyed with skepticism relative to their allegiance, especially if they belonged to German immigrant organizations. He did and it could be scary. There actually were some German spies lurking about that were apprehended by U.S. government agents. He was still careful about mailings to his family still in Deutschland, so refrained from including a return address.

He belonged to a German fraternal club: The Sons of Hermann. As a child my mother would accompany him to some of their dinner meetings. She learned much about his home country and culture. This influenced her into corresponding with the family in Germany and we do still to this day, now by email. But he also was a Mason...not a German club. Most of all though, he was a proud, patriotic American demonstrated by an American Flag tattooed on his arm. He loved America and never returned to his homeland. Neither did my mother or any of his other four children. But I did...years later...and not only paid a visit to his home city, but the actual house in which he was raised! It was a spiritual

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experience. I felt his presence. Whether this was only imagined, I don't know. I only know that I felt it.

So here is the story of an authentic adventurer.

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