

The Rhine River Patrol

by Louis Foster

Stein collecting is often routine and after a few decades of it, we tend to think we have seen them all and there is seldom anything new. This is pretty much the rut I was in collecting Munich Maid character steins. With over 150 of them, all I was missing was a few sizes. With HR's it was pretty much the same after the first 50 or 75 of them. Of course, the beer stein books and 20 years of commercial auction catalogs added to this sense of "been there, seen that." As a result, with my interest in US regimentals (or Cold War steins), I was approaching the same rut. Other than some infantry battalion whose number or unit crest was unknown to me, it was becoming pretty routine.

This routine was suddenly broken a year ago when I spotted a very different Cold War stein. There on eBay I was looking at a stein which was described as U.S. Navy Rhine River Patrol. Now coming from an Army family and being a Cold War veteran myself, I figured this made about as much sense as the Bolivian Navy or even the Bavarian Navy would make. This stein placed sailors 300 miles from salt water.

Needless to say, I had to find out what the U.S. Navy was doing in "soldier land." In 1950 I had sailed from New York to Bremerhaven on the U.S.S. Goethals and it was operated by the U.S. Navy because that was what they did ~ go to sea. What on earth was the navy up to on "our turf"?

What I learned was that in about March of 1949, the Commander, Naval Forces Germany (COMNAFORGER), assumed duties to patrol the Rhine River in the US Sector, regulate shipping on the river, and assist in moving military equipment over the river.



Stein purchased from ebay

This was initially accomplished with one Air-Sea Transport, and ten WW II *Kriegesmarine* torpedo recovery boats. This was a total of eleven boats; but there were only eight crews that consisted of: seven US Navy personnel supplemented by three soldiers from the US Constabulary (see: Prosit, March, 2006) - one machine gunner, and a two-man demolition team.

In 1952, the first new boats were delivered. The approximate statistics were as follows: They displaced 25 tons, were 80 long, 12½' feet wide and had a 3"

One of the boats used by the Rhine River Patrol





feet long, 12½ feet wide and had a 3" draught. Powered by two diesel engines, they were rated at 440 horsepower and could do 21 knots.

There were three bases; Schierstein, Mannheim and Karlsruhe (see above map). By 1957 movement was underway to transfer responsibility and equipment to the West German government and this was accomplished June 30, 1958.

One interesting mission of the Rhine River Patrol was to provide humanitarian aid during the floods of 1954 in the Low Countries.

These photos show the Patrol boats used on these mission. Not being a Navy man myself, I see these boats as very similar to the PT boats of World War II like President Kennedy's PT-109.

Rare boat finial



Boat illustration on the steins side



Boat from Rhine River Patrol



Cold War steins are becoming an important category within stein collecting. They represent the history of our military and remain as a permanent record of the brave men and women that have served our country.

