



Liberators

Sidney Cooley

Sidney Cooley was born in Springfield, MA on December 21, 1913. Well known locally as a former orchestra leader and later as credit manager of Standard Tire Sales for a number of years, Sid had just graduated Western New England Law School (evening division) when he was inducted into the army in 1942. He completed his basic training at Fort Devens and three months later he graduated OCS at Camp Lee, Virginia. Sid was then assigned to the 63rd infantry in Van Dorn Mississippi. While in Mississippi he met Anne ("Pudsie") Sachse in Baton Rouge. They were engaged when he was mobilized and sent to Europe.



Sidney Cooley in Beyreuth in 1946 with his dog Daisy.

When Sidney Cooley was drafted, he never expected to be promoted to the rank of captain, let alone be designated the military commander of a Displaced Persons Camp. Sid Cooley thought that when the war ended he would be sent back to America, where his future wife was waiting for him. But instead of being discharged, his commanding officer asked him to stay on

and help out in the American Zone of Germany. After the war, the Allies wanted people who were "politically clean" to run things.

As a Jew, Sid was horrified by what he saw in the newly liberated concentration camps. He wanted to do something meaningful that would make a positive difference for the hundreds of thousands of Jewish Holocaust survivors whose lives were permanently uprooted.

While stationed in Beyreuth, Germany he was placed in command of a unit that was assisting with Displaced Persons. Word spread among the survivors that a Jewish soldier who also spoke Yiddish was in charge of the Displaced Persons camp in Beyreuth. Rabbi Spiro, the Jewish chaplain in the area also told refugees to go to Beyreuth.

Though it was near Nuremberg, Beyreuth was considered off the beaten track. Sid and the soldiers under his command were able to do many things to help the

survivors that went beyond their orders. Over the weeks, more and more Jewish Displaced Persons flocked into Beyreuth. Sid Cooley was designated military commander of the area. He assumed control of an estate that had been in the possession of Julius Streicher, the editor of the Nazi hate newspaper *Der Sturmer*. Sid moved over three hundred Jewish Holocaust survivors into the estate.



First wedding in Beyreuth. The bride and groom are in the first row – first two people on left. Sid Cooley is in the second row directly behind the groom.

He assisted representatives of the Jewish Agency in training the survivors to do agricultural work in preparation for immigration to Palestine.

Major General Frank A. Keating, Commander of the 102nd Infantry Division in World War II and U.S. Military Governor of Germany after World War II and Rabbi Spiro visited Beyreuth to see the school.



Major General Keating and Rabbi Spiro (with beard) attend a Zionist rally at Beyreuth.

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Sidney Cooley continued

While in Beyreuth Captain Cooley also served as a prosecutor of local Nazis at trials conducted by the United States Army.

Captain Cooley, seated at the table second from right, conducted trials of local war criminals.

Sid Cooley was discharged in 1946 and was not in Europe to see his project concluded. However most of the survivors he helped settled in Israel after it was declared a state in 1948. When he left Beyreuth, the survivors presented him with a citation, thanking him for all he did to give them hope and help them return to life. "...we were few and broken in spirit and in body. You, our flesh and blood, gathered the broken remnants and breathed into us a spirit of hope and courage and self-confidence. You were like a father and a brother.... Now we are several hundred strong and organized and on our way out of the Disapora. Wherever we shall go we shall carry in our hearts the memory of your deeds...."

While serving in Europe, Sidney Cooley was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star. He was discharged from the military with the rank of Major.

When he returned to America Sid married Pudsie. They settled in Springfield where he opened a Law practice with his brother Edward in 1946. The firm became Cooley Shrair. Sidney Cooley served as special justice of the District Court of Franklin County from 1960 to 1973 and was appointed as the presiding judge of the District Court of Western Hampden County in Westfield in 1973. Sid and Pudsie Cooley had three children - Larry, Debbie and Michael, and three grandchildren - Jennifer, Tanya and Joshua. Both Judge and Mrs. Cooley received many civic and charitable awards over the years.



Citation given to Captain Sidney M. Cooley by the Jews in Beyreuth, Germany in 1946.

