
WHERE'S THE GOLD?

By Master Sergeant Patrick V. Garland (Retired)

I was recently contacted by Mrs. Dene Wilson, the daughter-in-law of Chief Warrant Officer Four William C. Wilson—a deceased U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (USACIDC) (commonly referred to as “CID”) agent. Mrs. Wilson, who intends to donate papers and artifacts that once belonged to Chief Warrant Officer Four Wilson to the U.S. Army Military Police Museum, related some amazing stories that I would like to share.

William C. Wilson was born in Detroit, Michigan, on 17 September 1910 and was serving as a Michigan state trooper and military reservist when he was ordered to active duty in late 1943. He reported for duty on 10 January 1944¹ and received initial training at the Military Police School, Fort Custer, Michigan. He was then assigned to Company C, 508th Military Police Battalion, Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The unit deployed to Scotland and, from there, to the European Theater of Operations in 1944. By the time the German army formally surrendered on 1 May 1945, the 508th had established a headquarters in Munich, Germany. During the latter part of that year, Wilson (who was then a sergeant) was assigned as a military policeman with the 3d Military Government Regiment, which was also stationed in Munich. He was assigned to the 13th CID in early 1946, and he attended the Criminal Investigator’s Course at the European Command Training Center.

In the meantime—as U.S. bombers pounded Berlin, Germany, and Russian armies encircled the city in 1945—Adolf Hitler and his loyal followers realized that they needed to move billions of dollars in gold and currency (including U.S. currency) to safer locations so that it could be used to finance a Fourth Reich. Consequently, the German treasures were removed from Berlin through various means. While some of these assets were taken to Spain, Switzerland, Italy, and Austria, most went to the Final Redoubt in the alpine region of Germany.

In April 1945, caches of gold and currency began to be recovered. The discovery of the first hoard (in the town of Merkers, located in Thuringia, Germany) was purely accidental. Two American military policemen from the 90th U.S. Division detained two female displaced persons for verification of their status. Once their status was recorded, the police were ordered to take the women home—since one of them was very obviously pregnant. Along the way, the group passed a mine and the military policemen asked the women about it. The women indicated that the Germans had buried gold there. The

military policemen reported the conversation; a few days later, American Soldiers entered the mine, where they initially found 550 bags of German paper currency—amounting to more than one billion reichsmarks. Moving farther into the mine, the Soldiers encountered a brick wall, which they breached with explosives. And what they found next was mind-boggling: thousands of bags, arranged neatly in rows, containing gold bullion, gold coins, and paper currency. A total of 250 tons of gold was found in this one mine alone.

Later in April, the U.S. 10th Armored Division moved into Bavaria, Germany, capturing Bad Tölz, Berchtesgaden, and Garmisch. As the Americans settled into their occupational role, the German officers who were overseeing the hidden gold caches began to wonder how they were to continue safeguarding the treasure. Some apparently bribed U.S. Soldiers in “Let’s Make a Deal” style scenarios in which they offered the Americans hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars in exchange for passes to cross the border into Switzerland, where they deposited gold bullion into German accounts. One Nazi officer claimed that he delivered U.S. currency to American Soldiers, who then traded it for German currency. And a military police sergeant allegedly tried to mail \$25,000 worth of U.S. \$100 bills to his home.

While the 10th Armored Division was instrumental in recovering gold bullion, the unit historian denies that



Soldiers of the 13th CID Detachment, including William C. Wilson (second from right) and Robert B. Shaw (far right).

members were involved in any wrongdoing. According to Les Nichols—

While we occupied Garmisch in 1945, the theft of gold bullion was rampant, but the black market was just beginning to assert its ugly head. During 1946–1947, the black market rose to immense proportions. Now these are the specifics of the 10th Armored role with regard to Nazi gold. Among those key officers were Colonel Bill Eckles, Division G-2 (intelligence); Major William Geiler, 55th Engineer Battalion Commander; Major Roger Rawley, G-2; Major Ken McIntyre; Sergeant Al Singleton; and several others. It should be noted that no 10th Armored Division officers or troops were involved in stealing gold or currencies. The Tiger Division was in the center of all that occurred in the Garmisch area and is featured in Nazi Gold [The Story of the World's Greatest Robbery and Its Aftermath] with regard to the 728 gold bars unearthed by the 55th Engineers. There was an investigation of our division as to what happened to that gold, valued at the time to be 10 million dollars. However, because of a record-keeping problem, the case was cleared up and the 10th Armored was totally cleared of any wrongdoing.²

However, by the time various caches arrived at the approved American depository in Frankfurt, inventories were often considerably reduced. General George S. Patton ordered CID to investigate.

The unit closest to Garmisch was the 13th CID, and the first agent assigned to the case was Agent Walter Snyder, who Wilson described as “one of the 13th CID’s best agents—able, honest, and a good German speaker.”³ Wilson served as the liaison between Snyder’s team



Agent Walter Snyder of the 13th CID Detachment

of German police detectives, the Munich Police Headquarters, and other investigative agencies. American forces had no idea how much German gold had been buried, stolen, or otherwise dispensed (though various estimates now place the total value in the billions of dollars); therefore, the focus of the investigation was on the differences between the initial inventories at recovery and the amounts that were actually received at the authorized depository in Frankfurt. As the investigation progressed, agents from the 32d CID and the 481st CID joined the effort. By that time, Agent Snyder was no longer involved in the case.⁴

Much of the hidden gold was stolen by the Russian army and former Nazi officials. And based on the CID investigation, some U.S. military personnel were also considered prime suspects. However, no one was ever charged or tried for the theft or misappropriation of German gold.

In 1947, Wilson left Germany and reenlisted at Fort Kilmer, New Jersey. He returned to Munich the following year, where he was assigned to the 13th CID once again. During that tour, his friend and coworker (Agent Walter Snyder) and a German detective, were murdered by a German teenager. Agent Snyder’s death was investigated by CID Agent Robert B. Shaw of the 13th—another friend of Wilson.

Following Wilson’s two-year tour in Germany, he returned to the United States, where he served with the Military Police Detachment, 1301st Army Service Unit, Fort Monmouth, New Jersey; 17th CID, Brooklyn, New York; and 331st CID, Fort Dix, New Jersey, until he was discharged again in December 1951 to be appointed as a CID warrant officer.

Wilson went on to serve with distinction as a warrant officer. He was assigned to the 331st CID, Fort Dix (1951–1952); 51st and 19th CID Detachments, Korea (1954); Criminal Investigator’s Course (instructor), Military Police School, Fort Gordon, Georgia (1954–1958); 102d CID, Fort Shafter, Hawaii (1958–1961); Polygraph School (instructor), Fort Gordon (1964–1966); 523d CID, 7th Division CID, and 2d CID, Korea (1966–1967); and 3d Military Police Group (CID), Fort McPherson, Georgia (1967–1969).

During his career, Wilson attended Military Police School, CID School (twice), Polygraph School, the Criminal Investigator Supervisor’s Course, the Polygraph Transition Course, and the Instructor Course. He also attended several short courses, including the Homicide Investigation and Narcotics Investigation Courses. Wilson’s awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with two oak-leaf clusters, Good Conduct Medal (3d Award), American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal

with two service stars, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, and the Luxembourg Croix de Guerre.

After his retirement, Chief Warrant Officer Four Wilson collaborated with the authors of *Nazi Gold: The Story of the World's Greatest Robbery and Its Aftermath*, providing them with documents, photos, and recollections of events surrounding the story of the German gold. In addition, he worked with the Sheriff's Department in Douglas County, Georgia, for 9 years.

Chief Wilson died at the Atlanta Veterans Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia, on 12 April 2003 and was buried with full military honors at the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton on 26 April 2003.⁵ His wife Clara died on

2 January 2004. They had one son William R. Wilson, who is now also deceased.

Acknowledgement: Special thanks to Mrs. Wilson for kindly sharing service records, photos, and tales of her late father-in-law.

Endnotes:

¹Service records of William C. Wilson.

²Les Nichols, "Nazi Gold and the U.S. 10th Armored Division in Europe During WW II," *Tiger Tales*, November 2001.

³Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, *Nazi Gold: The Story of the World's Greatest Robbery and Its Aftermath*, Congdon & Weed, Inc., New York, 1984, p. 194.

⁴Patrick V. Garland, "Anatomy of a Murder," *Military Police*, Spring 2010, pp. 37–39.

⁵Personal correspondence with Mrs. Dene Wilson.

Master Sergeant Garland retired from the U.S. Army in 1974. During his military career, he served in military police units and criminal investigation detachments and laboratories. At the time of his retirement, Master Sergeant Garland was serving as a ballistics evidence specialist at the European Laboratory. He remained in this career field until retiring from civilian law enforcement in 1995.

Military Policemen Become Rangers

By Specialist Garrett Hernandez

Three members of the 21st Military Police Company, 503d Military Police Battalion (Airborne), 16th Military Police Brigade, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, have completed one of the Army's most physically and mentally challenging courses of instruction. Sergeant First Class Ricky Royals, Sergeant Marcus Emelio, and Sergeant Christopher McMurdy recently graduated from the U.S. Army Ranger School.

Ranger School, which is open to Soldiers of any Army career field, is a demanding, 3-phase, 61-day combat leadership course that tests the students' physical, mental, and tactical aptitudes.

According to Sergeant First Class Royals (an operations sergeant who coordinates training and allocates resources in preparation for deployment), "The hardest part was the sleep and food deprivation."

"You have to develop yourself as a new leader," said Sergeant McMurdy. "In Ranger School, you develop the confidence and leadership style to lead others through chaotic and dangerous situations."

In addition to the regular coursework, the three Ranger School graduates were also required to attend a Pre-Ranger Course. Following the successful completion of that course, they had about a week before the start of Ranger School. In recalling the challenges faced during the preparation phase, Sergeant Emelio (who works as an operations sergeant alongside Sergeant First Class Royals) stated, "I think it was harder than Ranger School."

Royals, Emelio, and McMurdy are now authorized to wear the Ranger tab on their uniforms—a testament to their preparation for meeting the challenges they will face throughout their military careers. Each has also pledged to mentor other Soldiers who wish to attend Ranger School. Their hope is to increase the number of military policemen who volunteer for and graduate from the school.



Sergeant First Class Royals, left, Sergeant Emelio, center, and Sergeant McMurdy, right, proudly display their Ranger tabs.

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