

This is a story about concrete and steel
but more importantly, of love of country and freedom.

BY DIANA
LAMB DIN MEYER



PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRUCE N. MEYER

THE BERLIN WALL COMES TO RAPID CITY

The jagged edges of pockmarked concrete and the twisted, rusted railroad ties give the impression of a fearful, dreaded no-man's land in the midst of what is otherwise the pleasant surrounding of Rapid City's Memorial Park.

However, this monument of rubble is a point of pride for the people of this city, a symbol of community spirit and a tribute to the concept of freedom.

These are parts of the Berlin Wall that, from August 1961 until November 1989, separated free people from those repressed and controlled by their government. The world watched in amazement that November night 20 years ago when the people of Berlin, with hammers, axes and their bare hands, tore down the wall, a portion of which draws history buffs to a corner of Rapid City's Memorial Park.

ONE MAN'S STORY

Paul Reinke was a 27-year-old U.S. Air Force captain stationed at Hahn Air Base

Tank traps (inset), also called dragon's teeth, first used during World War II to stop the progress of vehicles, were also used to protect the Berlin Wall (above).



In their time, signs in multiple languages were ominous warnings, at Checkpoint Charlie and other passages through the wall.

west of Frankfurt, Germany, in 1961 and witnessed, almost firsthand, the construction of the wall. It was not the first time he had been witness to the drama of life in Berlin.

Reinke was 14 years old in 1948 at the time of the Berlin Air Lift, when the Soviet Union cut off all supplies to the city and Allied forces flew hundreds of cargo flights to the city each day to keep its citizens alive. Reinke's father's career as an Air Force chaplain had taken the family to Munich, Germany. Reinke remembers the memorial service his father led for two pilots who died delivering those supplies.

By Nov. 9, 1989, Reinke was 55 years old, married to Ingrid (a woman he had met in Germany), and living a comfortable life as a dentist in Rapid City. He marveled at what he and Ingrid watched with the rest of the world as the wall came down that night.

Within days, portions of the wall were being sold to the highest bidders around the world. But it wasn't until a traveling exhibit on the Berlin Wall came to Rapid City in the summer of 1993 that the wall made a strong and lasting impression on Reinke and his neighbors in South Dakota.

PATRIOTISM IS ALIVE AND WELL

World War II veterans were among the many people who laid wreaths at the base of the Rapid

City exhibit, which had been coordinated by the Allied Museum in Berlin. The sentiment was not lost on the museum's director, Helmut Trotnow, who visited Rapid City that summer and several times since.

"He was very moved that people in this remote part of America were so deeply concerned about what had happened in Berlin," said Reinke.

Through friendships formed that summer, local businessman Dale Clement purchased two sections of the wall from the Allied Museum for \$450 each. Reinke, in turn, was intrigued by the twisted train rails that had been welded into tank traps. He bought two for \$250 each. Numerous in-kind donations of concrete, labor and landscaping brought it all together for an official dedication ceremony in 1996.

And that's how the Berlin Wall came to Rapid City.

A MOVING EXHIBIT

Dozens of locales throughout the world now have portions of the Berlin Wall on display. However, the people in Rapid City believe theirs to be the most comprehensive in the U.S. More than 32 photos and several pages of text explain what led to the building and destruction of this famous barrier.

Reinke traveled to Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin to secure the rights to the exhibit's photos. He believes those images, from a private museum at Brandenburg Gate, are the most powerful components of the exhibit.

"There's one picture of the communists toppling the cross off of a church steeple that really gets me," said Reinke. "There are always a couple of people at the exhibit, no matter what time of day you go by."

Located adjacent to the Rapid City Civic Center and the hockey arena, Memorial Park receives a lot of traffic from locals and visitors. The 70-acre park was originally dedicated to the 238 residents who died in a violent flash flood in this area in 1972. Today, the park is also home to a veteran's memorial, a band shell, a rose garden and several festivals throughout the year. The Berlin Wall is a featured stop on the Rapid City trolley tour through town. For trip-planning information, contact your AAA Travel agent or visit AAA.com/travel. **H&A**

Indefatigable traveler and freelancer Diana Lambdin Meyer and her photographer husband, Bruce, make their home in Parkville, Mo.

BERLIN WALL ON DISPLAY

Other locations in the U.S. where portions of the Berlin Wall are on display include:

- CIA Headquarters, Langley, Va.
- Newseum, Arlington, Va.
- Seattle Center, Seattle
- Chapman University, Orange, Calif.
- Ronald Reagan Presidential Fountain & Museum, Simi Valley, Calif.
- George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, College Station, Texas
- John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum, Boston
- Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace, Yorba Linda, Calif.
- U.S. Air Force Museum, Dayton, Ohio
- Westminster College, Fulton, Mo.
- Fort Leavenworth, Fort Leavenworth, Kan.
- James Baker Institute, Houston