

The Ghost Army: Film Review

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On Wednesday evening, the Abbaye de Neumunster (CCRN) was the venue for the screening of the film documentary *The Ghost Army* in the presence of Rick Beyer, the film-maker.

Timothy Lone, Director of the Patton Stiftung Sustainable Trust, introduced the film and thanked all the sponsors one by one, as well as representatives of the 52nd Fighter Wing of the US Air Force who were also in attendance. Of specific mention was Banque Fortuna which was supporting the initiative by hosting one of the two exhibition spaces (the CCRN is the other) of photographs and other material related to *The Ghost Army*. He introduced Rolf Tarrach, the Rector at the University of Luxembourg, and Helen Patton, grand-daughter of US General Patton, as well as Jane Messenger, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy here in Luxembourg, and Bofferding.

Jane Messenger took the microphone and stated that we have all heard many World War 2 stories, but *The Ghost Army* story was unusual, yet it is time the story is told. Helen Patton explained that the stories now coming out from that period are more intricate than the ones heard until now. The CEO of Lionshare Media, Susan Brazer, who helped get the film to Luxembourg, said that she had lived in Luxembourg 20 years ago when she worked at Astra (now SES), and acknowledged the innovation of the subject of the film as well as that of the film-maker.

Rick Beyer thanked everyone in Luxembourg for their support and hospitality over the past two weeks he has been here. *The Ghost Army* remained a secret for 40 years after the war but can now be told.

The film explained in the winter of 1944, how up to 1,100 GIs helped the allied troops in their push towards the

Rhine, both north of Luxembourg (and the Battle of the Bulge) down as far as Verdun, scene of the worst WWI atrocities. From their base at what is now the Limpertsberg base of the University of Luxembourg, they created inflatable tanks, audio effects and impersonation to make it seem a large army was indeed present.

Shortly after D-Day, the men of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops landed in France. Known as the Ghost Army, they staged more than 20 deceptions in the European Theatre of Operations to fool the enemy about the strength and location of American units. Their mission was top secret and was hushed up for decades after the war's end.

The film showed how The Ghost Army helped the allied effort but, so good were their deceptions, they were almost caught in the Battle of the Bulge. The film also showed that many of those involved ended up with careers as artists; it also had many light-hearted moments to deflect from the seriousness of the situation.

Photo by Geoff Thompson: Jane Messenger, US Embassy; Rick Beyer, film-maker; Rolf Tarrach, University of Luxembourg; Susan Brazer, CEO of Lionshare Media.