



Musings of Watching an Old War Movie

by

Gary Heartsill

20 September 2020

Musings

Synonyms: Adjective – Meditative

-) broody, cogitative, contemplative, meditative, melancholy, pensive, reflective, ruminant, ruminative, thoughtful

Words Related to *musings*

-) introspective, retrospective, self-reflective, earnest, grave, sedate, serious, serious-minded, severe, sober, solemn,
-) somber (or sombre), weighty.
-) philosophical (also philosophic)
-) analytic (or analytical), logical, rational
-) deliberate, purposeful
-) absentminded, abstracted, preoccupied

Near Antonyms for *musings*

-) featherbrained, flighty, flippant, frivolous, goofy, harebrained, light-headed, scatterbrained
-) brainless, mindless, silly, thoughtless, unthinking

Introduction

These meditative comments have to do with a portion of my life time dream of being able to grow older while deliberately watching and enjoying old War Movies. Normally I am quite thoughtful and serious-minded about picking out or choosing what to watch as most movies, programs, history, or TV programs are weighty, serious, and purposeful.

Except for the last TV mini-series on War. I was kind of hairbrained as I sat through the first few episodes of “Winds of War” as it was just something I had not seen or really heard a lot of since it came out in 1983. Actually I was so scatterbrained I didn’t know they were two connecting TV Miniseries. My flippant attitude turned grave, sober, and contemplative.

It was not until the end of the seven episodes of “Winds of War” that I introspectively asked myself “what are all the other parts that keep showing up have to do with “Wind”? Course, then being analytical about what I was seeing advertised, I rationally put together that there were two movies - and they were connected. I felt a little goofy. My melancholy attitude quickly changed into a somber, severe, and solemn ruminative adventure – one that I will not forget.

So, after my flighty and broody intro, here are my self-reflective, cogitative, and philosophical musings.

Self-reflective Musing

About half way through these two TV miniseries I replaced five calcium hypochlorite tablets for my septic system in the back yard. They are about three inches wide – big ole white pills – and they are “an effective chemical for delivering chlorine into water.”

The problem is handling these ‘pills’ as they are very caustic. You don’t want to breath any fumes when picking them up or let it get in your eyes – or your nose. Actually, they have to be stored in a tightly closed container and I use a big metal barrel sealed at the top to keep any fumes from leaking out. Being stored in my garage I can’t have any leaks.

The day I opened the container to dig out the pills I exposed myself to a full face of escaping fumes. My reaction, an automatic repulsion of the whiff, was not a blow back but a gasp. I couldn’t help it. It was just a quick suck of air like I had been hit in the face. *Bam!* it was there – and it burned.

I shook it off and went on with my task but the pounding realization was the connection to this caustic fume to a cyanide-based pesticide invented in Germany called **Zyklon B**.

“Death occurs in a human being weighing 68 kilograms (150 lb) within two minutes of inhaling 70 mg of hydrogen cyanide.”



Taken from Dachau gas installation – 4/7/46

Cogitative Musing

The real task of this survey (paper, notes, article) is just for me, to make some notes on the TV series so I can look back and remind myself about how serious the war story is. This should just be my random scribbles of what I can remember, although I just might make it a blog and refer to, add to, and comment on, as I pick up more insightful meaningfulness in my searching and researching.

This means there will be little order, no dot connecting, and probably will just be read my memyownself. However, there are some good points in history – some clarification notes – worth going back through and rereading.

“...Became the television equivalent of a good read that can't be put down.” (John O'Connor, NYT)

Winds of War Air dates Feb 6 to Feb 13, 1983 Running time 883 minutes (14:43)
1 "The Winds Rise" Filming from Dec 1, 1980 to Dec 5, 1981
2 "The Storm Breaks"
3 "Cataclysm"
4 "Defiance"
5 "Of Love and War"
6 "Changing of the Guard"
7 "Into the Maelstrom"

(Have I told you this is about **Auschwitz**? About the g-damned Nazis? - reflective and pensive musings.)

War and Remembrance Running time 1620 mins (27 hours) Filming: Jan 1986 – Sep

Best 1988 Promotion video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAQqNzJxGUw> (1:59)

Parts I – VII
I "December 15–27, 1941"
II "January 27, 1942 - May 6, 1942"
III "May 26 - July 25, 1942"
IV "July 25 - November 2, 1942"
V "November 2 - December 1, 1942"
VI "December 20, 1942 - April 3, 1943"
VII "December 20, 1942 - April 3, 1943"
Parts VIII-XII: **The Final Chapter**
VIII "November 25, 1943 - May 16, 1944"
IX "May 16, 1944 - June 10, 1944"
X "June 22 - October 28, 1944"
XI "October 28, 1944 - March 18, 1945"
Opening Trailer Part 11 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddOJRCXnlxA> (1:52)
or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDu_yssnawc (2:56)
XII "April 12 - August 7, 1945"

NOTE: Play this first: This is actually the first episode of War and Remembrance. Just watch the first two minutes. To me it is the best two minutes of the whole bloody series...well, it holds the guts together.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bRBT-xN6_k

It is titled **"COLORS!"** (you can stand, or cry, or go to 'fix bayonets!')

Web notes (by Beichman)

In the 1970s, Wouk published two monumental novels, *The Winds of War* (1971) and its sequel, *War and Remembrance* (1978). He described the latter, which included a devastating depiction of [the Holocaust](#), as "the main tale I have to tell." Both were made into successful television miniseries, the first in 1983 and the second in 1988. Although they were made several years apart, both were directed by [Dan Curtis](#) and both starred [Robert Mitchum](#) as Captain Victor "Pug" Henry, the main character. The novels are historical fiction. Each has three layers: the story told from the viewpoints of Captain Henry and his circle of family and friends, a more or less straightforward historical account of the events of the war, and an analysis by a member of [Adolf Hitler's](#) military staff, the insightful fictional General Armin von Roon. Wouk devoted "thirteen years of extraordinary research and long, arduous composition" to these two novels, noted [Arnold Beichman](#). "The seriousness with which Wouk has dealt with the war can be seen in the prodigious amount of research, reading, travel and conferring with experts, the evidence of which may be found in the uncatalogued boxes at Columbia University" that contain the author's papers.^[17]

Beichman, Arnold (1984). Herman Wouk: The Novelist as Social Historian. Transaction Books.

Trivia

At the time it was produced, *War and Remembrance* was the most expensive miniseries of all time. The script was 1492 pages long with 358 speaking roles. There were 2070 scenes filmed at 757 locations using over 44,000 actors including extras. And all of that for a bargain price of 110 million U.S. dollars!

Description, cast, trivia, and episode list (*War and Remembrance*) are in the URL:

<http://www.crazyabouttv.com/warandremembrance.html>

Notes

One of the first things that jumped out at me was Pug. He was played by Robert Mitchum and for a man born two years after my father (1915) he looked pretty darn good in a Navy uniform when in his mid to late 60s. The story uses him to go through the war and is a man of all positions and a man of a remarkable family.

I was impressed Pug was in Berlin as a Naval attaché and meets with folks like Hitler and Goering (who said a bomb would not drop on Germany) and then, while on leave in England right after the war started, he rode in an English two-engine bomber on one of the first night raids to downtown Berlin. He also becomes Roosevelt's 'secret spy' and meets with Churchill, Mussolini, and Stalin.

This character carries the weight of the series and being a product of Herman Wouk it ends up showing the detailed extent of the history of the war...especially The Battle of Midway (paper in progress).

Only next to these two guys is the director of the series Dan Curtis. He 'caught' the meaning of Wouk's book. The online study of these three is in itself a worthy project. Perhaps, so I can remember it better, here is a faithful and instructive comment worth saving:

"Director Dan Curtis has exhibited both the will and ability to take both Herman Wouk's novel and incorporate it so successfully into this massive, and titanic film. I believe, that both *WoW* and *W & R*, along with "Saving Private Ryan" should be required film watching for all graduating high schoolers. Admittedly many of the films realistic and gritty scenes are difficult to watch- but unfortunately reality is often a cruel place. Both *WoW* and *W&R* give an honest lesson on the eventual triumph of the forces of good over evil which the world faced in the middle of the 20th century."

Once I figured out there were two episodes the evenings watching the War were eagerly anticipated. I didn't spend all day watching but did see more than one during a 'matinee' – course, I saved my sipping of gin till the late show.

Winds of War was a drag with Pug's second boy "Briny" and his character lacked. He played with Ali McGraw as "Natalie" and although ok, they took too much time fighting. I also thought too much time was spent on Natalie trying to get her uncle out of Europe, course this is the story line – and well done – but in the end it all comes together in one last scene with Natalie, Byron, and their boy. It is quite moving.

Although I was impressed with the spunk of Pam and her character in the two episodes, the one person who in my opinion made her '15 minutes of fame' as the character of Natalie, was Jane Seymour. She had replaced McGraw for War and Remembrance.



By Jane_Seymour_(1988).jpg

My claim to fame for her comes from not only her elegant looks but her presentation in the film. My guess is most will agree on this assumption...we could stop right here noting just this picture her greatness is award winning. From an interested point of view she is also noteworthy with a couple of trivia points.

Jane Seymour, [OBE](#) (born **Joyce Penelope Wilhelmina Frankenberg**; 15 February 1951)

She chose the screen name Jane Seymour, after the English queen [Jane Seymour](#), because it seemed more saleable. One of Seymour's notable features is [heterochromia](#), making her right eye brown and her left eye green.



Seymour, Emmy award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in "Onassis," 1988.

Not bad for a girl with heterochromia...

Yes, I know...how can you talk about a TV mini-series that had a running time of 2503 minutes in just a couple of pages?

Well, between Pug, the Navy war, Nat, and especially "COLORS!" I can at least tap out a couple of comments – something for me to go back and review...at least all this will be in one place.

Philosophical Musing

Ok, some have seen this mini-series, these notes will not add very much, and my comments probably will not take from the musings of someone who has not seen it.

I was wondering when they were shaving Natalie's hair that it didn't look like they were really cutting it off like a new Marine recruit . They didn't. The Auschwitz scene at the end was done first so her hair was not cut off. Watch her hair length as it goes to her waist in one long pig tail.

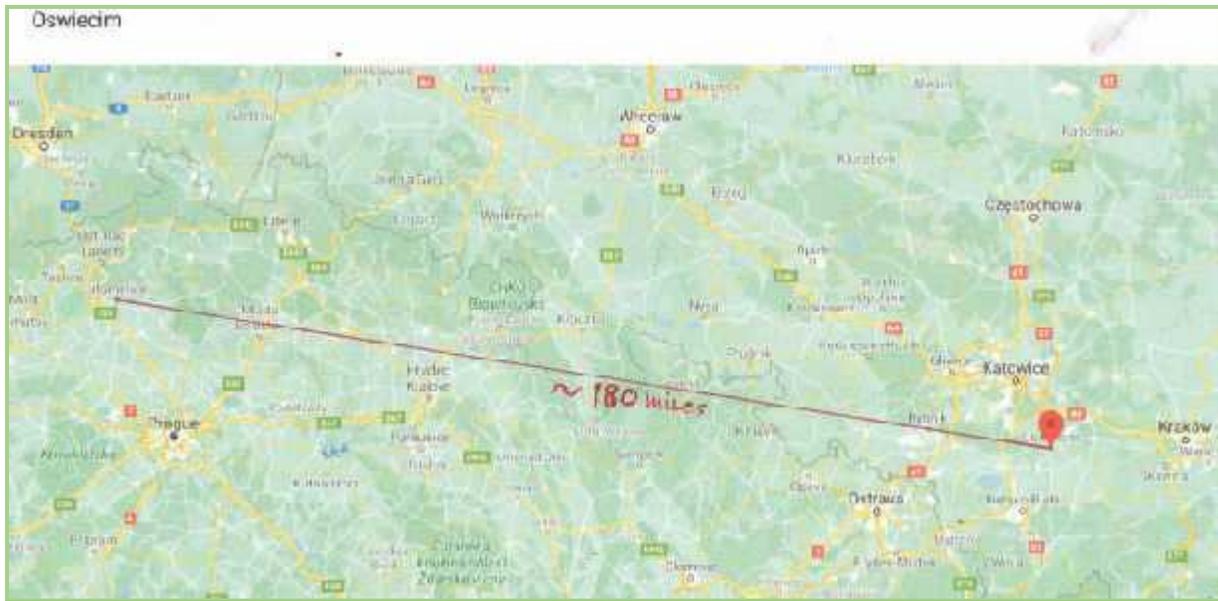
Can't tell you how upset I got watching the Nazis beat up on the Jews. How anyone could be that far removed from knocking teeth out of someone/anybody without seemingly showing some kind of remorse? Or machine gunning them in a ditch, worse, putting the live children in the crematorium?

We need to be reminded of the Holocaust. We need to remember what it looks like being herded into train cars, delousing areas, and gas chambers. The Final Chapters (parts VIII to XII) do exactly that.

The last chapters are meditative...severe and sombre (second spelling).

Was curious about the four day train ride (god awful as it was) from the Jewish ghetto in the town of Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia. Also I had missed exactly where Auschwitz was. A little brooding over some ole maps I had and finding some online shows Theresienstadt near Litomerice which is between Dresden and Prague. On Google maps it shows the museum near Litomerice.

The red line going west to east is about 180 miles long (the four day train trip would have, of course, tracks to follow) and goes almost to Krakow. Auschwitz in Oswiecim, Poland is shown just south of Katowice. This geography is shown below and is to add to the philosophical musing in this paper.



Straight line distance is ~180 miles between Theresienstadt and Oswiecim, then Auschwitz.



Oswiecim, Poland

A note somewhere says the director Dan Curtis got permission to use Auschwitz for some of the death camp scenes noting they had to reconstruct the crematorium. The movie scene of the train approaching in the night with the ghastly search light is just short of being absolutely ominous.

Here is some fitting history behind Auschwitz and the crimes:

<https://www.history.com/news/how-the-nazis-tried-to-cover-up-their-crimes-at-auschwitz>

One of the memorable scenes is watching the Jews being herded from the trains. There are some prison helpers in striped uniforms helping the people with their bags, kids, fear, and alarm. A first time visiting German officer asks one of the German guards why the refugees are helping the new Jews and asks "Don't they know?" A line to say with us is his answer "The Jew helper gets two choices: A bullet to the head or help with the new Jews."

This struck me rather severely as this is perhaps a good reason why the Germans were so involved in the final solution. They also had two choices.

This two choice solution seems to me to be in effect today in our lives as we see a similar push the Jews had as they were taken into Nazi Socialism that was engulfing all of Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

This also struck me rather severely that the Nazi party led with the burning and destroying of the Jewish population and businesses. It didn't take long to get started on loading up the railroad cars and sending them off to however many concentration camps they had.

What about us today with the threat we have with the burning, looting, beatings, and push to make this country into one party, no Constitution, no vote, and no say so?

I may come up with a good way to finish this by saying I won't watch it again. It would be like going back through the 8th grade again...just not something I don't want to do again.

Will spend some time with Kelly so make sure she at least knows the gist of what the gas smells like. Now, talking to my grandkids is another story...don't know how to handle that.

Ok, I got one! I remember during one of the 'peaceful demonstrations' where this little girl was stomping on an American flag, gleefully jumping up and down on it. We all know (well, most of 'us' know) jumping up and down on a flag (or burning it) is an American crime.

I like the first two minutes (earlier referenced) to watch the Marine command "COLORS!" This is where I will stand. My Air Force planes had the color markings of what I am talking about:



PINTEREST.COM

The Thunder Birds! – We flew these exact same HUNS in the Guard.

Yes, I GOT THIS! And will go with the Red, White, and Blue!

"SOUND Attention! COLORS!"