

## 2002 letter of apology from grandson of German pilot who sank the HMS Rohna in 1943

— Original Message —

From: Shawn Dochtermann <drdrmann@hotmail.com>

To: <namaskar@whidbey.com>

Sent: Monday, November 11, 2002 12:16 AM

Subject: Veterans Day

Dear Mr.Fievet,

Tomorrow is Veterans Day and I want to specially thank you for the duties you performed. I'm referring to all that were aboard the H.M.S. Rohna; those that survived or perished in the greatest U.S. Naval disaster ever. I'm proud of my country and all those that protect and serve(d) this great U.S.A. .

I know of this disaster from the words of my grandfather. Major (Hans) Johannas Evangalist Dochtermann served his country just as any other soldier has allegiance for their country. He always dreamed of being a commercial pilot for Lufthansa when he was a young man. He was one of the best of his class when he graduated in 1937. He never wanted to be a bomber pilot. In fact he was told by the draftsman he may just have an accident if he didn't follow his orders to fly for the Luftwaffe.

He gave me a personal account of the Rohna bombing. He and his fellow airman cheered over the radio on their flight back home to the base in Bordeaux. He also looked into my eyes and said that since the day that he viewed that missile hit the Rhona he has always felt a feeling of remorse and complete sadness for those that had to endure this living hell, to be a casualty of war. He always hoped that he would be forgiven ('Allegiance For our country' is all he had) by those that lived through the attack of the Rohna. He never flew commercially, but he always pointed out to me the passenger flights as they took off or landed into the Frankfurt International airport . He was one of 3% of the German pilots to survive the whole of WWII. He was a fine aviator and a true gentleman. I hope on this Veterans' Day Holiday that all of you that are still alive would be so kind as to forgive my grandfather. He always said a war is not over until all of the soldiers of that war are dead. He died in 1998. I now carry not his burden, but his blood, and the knowledge that war is hell for all sides. I will never forget the story of November 26, 1943, but all of you survivors carry a piece of this through your lives. I just pray that the world will never see anything like all of you saw through eyes and ears that day.

God Bless all of you and your families.

Shawn C. Dochtermann

Kodiak, AK

P.S. Please feel free to circulate this letter amongst all parties concerned.