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The Moscow Times Remembers: Thomas Skove

By The Moscow Times

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Thomas Skove

In the run-up to Victory Day on May 9, when Russia commemorates 70 years since the Allied victory over Nazi Germany, staff members at The Moscow Times describe the wartime experiences of their own families.

Today, deputy business editor Samuel Skove tells the story of his great-grandfather.

My great-grandfather, Thomas Skove, died just five days before the end of World War II in Europe, making him perhaps one of the last U.S. casualties of the war in Europe.

Thomas, the son of Danish immigrants to Cleveland, Ohio, was the director of the Cleveland Twist Drill company, and spent most of the war working to boost U.S. arms production.

In early 1945 the U.S. War Department asked him to tour German industrial plants in order to assess the effectiveness of Allied bombing. He was given the rank of Colonel, and after

a brief training period in London, departed for Europe, working alongside U.S. army units as they advanced at through Germany.

On May 4 he and several other inspectors set off for the German industrial town of Chemnitz. The city had just been taken by U.S. forces, and his group wanted to get there as soon as possible before looting by slave laborers obscured the effect of Allied bombing.

Late in the afternoon, their Jeep ran up against an apparently deserted German roadblock on the Autobahn. As their Army driver turned his head to reverse, he was shot in the head. German machine gun fire then broke out, killing my great-grandfather as he scrambled to take cover behind the car.

The inspectors had unknowingly entered a gap between the two U.S. armies in the area, whose quick advance left behind thousands of German soldiers in isolated pockets.

The two other inspectors with him, Harold Carson and Ben Bickle, were wounded and captured by the Germans — who surrendered to them the next day in order to avoid capture by the Russians.

The views expressed in opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the position of The Moscow Times.

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