Pope in Israel Sunday

By RUTH E. GRUBER

The two men joining Francis are friends with whom the pope frequently collaborated when he was the archbishop of Buenos Aires: Rabbi Abraham Skorka, former rector of the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires, and Sheikh Omar Abboud, a former secretary-general of the Islamic Center of Argentina.

A rabbi and a sheik are coming along

ON ISRAEL, FOREIGN POLICY

Does Hillary differ from Obama?

By RON KAMPEAS

Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks at the AJC global forum, May 14.

Friendly crowd at AJC cheers her on to 2016

Washington — A month before her foreign policy autobiography, Hard Choices, hits the bookstores, Hillary Rodham Clinton made an easy choice: She pitched her diplomatic credentials to a friendly Jewish audience.

Clinton’s speech to the American Jewish Committee was meant to send a signal to the pro-Israel

Longtime Denverite Leon Tulper during WW II.

For Tulper, who had spent the last several months with his unit as it fought its way across Germany, Ohrdruf offered horrors that dwarfed anything he had seen on the battlefield. The usually sunny face of Tulper — “89 and counting,” he says when asked his age — turns cloudy when he visualizes his memories. “There are,” he says, “just no words for it.”

Native of Kansas City, Tulper has lived in Denver since 1939, when he was 13. His father established a jewelry and watch business, Tulper & Co., downtown and later moved it to East Colfax where, in the shadow of East High School, it has long been an East Side fixture. Tulper took over the business after his father passed away.

He was drafted in Denver, did basic training in Texas and then volunteered for the US Army Air Corps, hoping to join a bomber squadron. That didn’t happen, since the Army decided it needed infantrymen more than airmen, resulting in Tulper’s posting in the 65th Infantry Division, part of Patton’s Third Army, stationed in the Pacific Theater, a few months after the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, Tulper served for some time until the Battle of the Bulge.

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Leo Tulper thought he had seen everything when he stumbled upon Ohrdruf.

A veteran remembers the worst

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“By the time we got there it was just about all over and we went back to Saarbrücken, which we occupied. Then orders came to go across and we went across the Saar River and fought our way to the Siegfried Line. That’s the place where I lost my hearing.”

The injury — which resulted in hearing loss that Tulper suffers to this day — was due to what GIs called a “screaming mimi,” a German term for rocket artillery. It exploded some 15 feet away.

Tulper was in a basement, injured not only in his ear. He was teazed to the ceiling by the explosion. The Purple Heart he earned for it hangs today, among a host of other medals, behind his desk at Tulper & Co.

“It was a nasty looking thing,” he says of the rocket. “When I went back to see what it was, it looked like a peeled-back banana — huge, 120 mm.”

His injuries were not enough to keep him from action. In relatively short order, Tulper found himself back with his unit.

He had many close calls in the American march across Germany.

Once, near Essen, he and other soldiers were bombed by a Messerschmitt Me 262, the first jet fighter ever flown.

“I was sitting on the back of the jeep, watching everybody jump into the ditches. I couldn’t hang up — I was taking a message from headquarters. The jeep skidded and I could see the pilot smiling at me. I almost died right there. The guy turns around, comes back but doesn’t find me on the whole crew. And that’s when we had, didn’t fire a shot. Come to find out, he was out of ammunition. We were dead to rights and I certainly was dead to rights. That was about as close to throwing in the towel as I’ve ever been.

“It was combat the rest of the time. We were part of Patton’s Third Army. When he said go, you go. You don’t stop, you don’t eat. We went clear to the Rhine River without a break of a lot of opposition and we were at the river for two or three days until we got orders to cross and we crossed as Frankfurt.

“We went as far as at a town called Mühlhausen, about 100 miles south of Berlin. We could have gotten to Berlin in a day and a half, but the orders came down to go south. That’s where we ran into the concentraion camp, the first time any of us had even heard of a camp.”

In the spring of 1945, the Third Army was making remarkable progress, advancing as much as 40 to 60 miles a day for beyond the expected 15 miles.

“We were kicking the Germans to hell and back,” Tulper recalls. “Patton said, ‘Don’t stop, keep pushing.’

As a result of that pace, many of the soldiers came down with “trench foot.” Tulper钊 thought it was on one of the many faint whereabouts of the army. Tulper made it a big camp.

Tulper’s voice grows shaky when he speaks about the Jewish child. It even gets shakier when he says this:

“I told you, one of the things that really killed me was one of the fel- las had a candy bar and he gave it to me. He couldn’t eat it. He just gave it to me, so I ate it. I think that’s what it was about — the yeshiva for awhile. I was real- ly a religious kid. That finished me off. I gotta tell you. Oh my G-d. If there was such a thing as a G-d, that’s supposed to make his kids safe, I mean, bad back could He have done anything like this?”

For the sake of family, Tulper did go to synagogue in later years, “but I never got back into it like I did for school. He struggles for the term — ‘What do you call it now?’ — and finally finds it, Post Traumatic Stress Dis- order. He has it, Tulper says — the loss of faith, the nightmares, the dreadful annual rite of April 6.

Until a few years ago, he didn’t speak about what wartime experiences.

“I didn’t say word one. All these medals that you see here? My daugh- ter found them in my duffel bag buried in the basement. She said we’re going to put these up. ‘It’s just that you don’t even want to recall it again. It’s such a lump in your throat, you don’t feel like talking about it. I’ve lived a long time with this. I’ll tell you. It was one of the worst things of my entire life.’

Tom Brokaw called the veterans of WWII the “greatest generation.” Tulper doesn’t buy it. He isn’t buying it.

“My family drives me crazy, call- ing me a hero. All I did was what everybody did. You were either in there just and you had to protect yourself. How do you think I’m someone’s somebody shooting at you.”

Combat was close and personal. Tulper always remembers being concerned only with what lay direct- ly before them and who was at their side.

“Absolutely, Tulper says. “We had seven guys in a unit and one was to be close. The casualty rate for radio operators was 85%. The Ger- mans had a triangular way of get- ting these guys out of the way. It was just very careful.

“Don’t you think of ourselves as a hero? There were 18 million guys in the army. One person is not a hero. If you save the life of somebody in your own group, you feel good, because you would have lost a buddy. A buddy.”

Tulper says he and his comrades were in laurel club. They sold the firm to a national chain turned into a bitter experience of “hate and prejudice” and he couldn’t trust. He bought that a handshake didn’t mean anything, not like I grew up, he says. “I didn’t grow up that way and I’m not going to die that way.”

He also is finding a measure of peace in dealing with his wartime past, largely by talking about it.

A few weeks ago, he spoke about those experiences before a group of five- graders at Denver Jewish High School.

“It was very good. I got some questions that I’d not told told me that she would never buy anything that was made by Germans. I disagreed. I thought the Germans of today are not the Germans of 60 years ago. I met everybody in every- body in the same way. You’re con- demning people who don’t deserve it. You’re telling them all this bad things, what it was. They had nothing to do with you. I can understand the anger, but you can burn inside until your stomach and we didn’t under- stand that. They had nothing to do with you. You can’t affect them or anybody else.”

He was amazed at some of the things the fifth graders had to say.

“Once you start getting it out of your system,” he says, “it’s not so hard.”

| FEATURE: Memorial Day | THEN | NOW |

| Leo Tulper the soldier | Leo Tulper the jeweler |

| “We see some big ovens, a den of clothing and then a den of bones. What the hell is this?” | “This little [Jewish, starving] boy cried and cried. I can’t get that look on his face out of my system” |

We didn’t have knowledge of the world, the way people do today. The world was not that small.”

A veteran remembers the worst

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