Layperson Summary

By Brandon Morgan

With Europe in shambles and the war on the European front over, the American military’s job was not over. The American government and military along with other allies proceeded to occupy Germany to prevent it from starting another conflict for the third time in the twentieth century. The occupation of Germany created a social contact between the occupying soldiers and the citizens of Germany. The United States military did not welcome socialization their soldiers encountered. The United States military outlawed fraternization through the fraternization ban they had for their soldiers. This however brought morale down for the military and pushed some soldiers to act undisciplined. The military decided to fix this issue and create a positive environment for the soldiers overseas. The military of the United States allowed family members to join the soldiers for the first time in 1946 to try to solve the internal issues involving the soldiers based in Germany. These family members became the focus of my studies and ultimately led me to my thesis. The American military families’ role was more than just to bring up morale and fix unruly behavior. They connected with other German citizens and families, providing relief and displaying democratic traits to the German citizens.

My thesis will shine new light on the occupation of Germany by examining American families in occupied Germany and their impact on the Occupying soldiers as well as the improved relations between the United States and Germany heading into the Cold War era. With a majority of previous studies focusing on the political aspects and the soldiers who carried out the occupation, I decided to look into how the families improved military life in Germany. Along with that, I will further explore on how the military families came to improve the relations the United States had with Germany. I believe this research is important because the improved
relations with Germany through help of the families were pivotal and a necessity to the United States military in the fight against communism.

From military records, reports, newspapers, magazines, and letters from the family members, I will research and investigate the problems of the soldiers, including sexual abuse and unruly behavior, as well as how this led family members to become part of the occupation. Then I will explain how the family members solved those shortcomings. In addition, I will attempt to explain how the families came to display a democratic American way of life, which built and developed an important alliance with the German nation. I will focus on the actions and events the family members were involved in with the German citizens and how their actions reflected onto the German people. I want to find out how regular family members became involved with such important political relations. In exploring these questions, I will argue that the occupying families' roles during the occupation between Germany and America became a necessity from 1946 to 1955 heading into the crucial years of the Cold War.