

## Small Fred

### "At The Elbe"

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Well mister I just overheard you talking through your  
drink

How the Russians lie like rugs how they've pushed us to  
the brink

Now sit right here beside me I've an old man's tale to  
tell

How Yanks and Reds were friends once at the Elbe.

My name is Joe Polowski I hitched up in '41

Left my sweetheart in Chicago and I learned to fire a  
gun

The fog in the Ardennes so thick you could not see your  
nose

Nor the ghosts in the Belgian wood advancing through  
the snow.

We left our dead behind us and we scaled the Dragon's  
Teeth

With screaming mimis overhead not one of us could  
sleep

Some fell to the enemy some fell to the creeping cold

And I killed a German sniper who was not fourteen  
years old.

When a soldier takes a hit my friend it ain't like  
Hollywood

Bone and guts go flying and everywhere there's blood

For a moment he is mystified there must be some  
mistake

As it all drains out in a crimson lake.

Then April turned the weather and likewise the tide of war

As haggard hungry Germans surrendered by the score

And thank god for the Russians who took the battle's brunt

And broke the back of the Wermacht along the eastern front. Then

We saw a burst of lilacs and the river swift and wide

And rest and welcome waiting for us on the other side

And Yanks and Reds laughed out loud to be alive at the Elbe.

We caught the glint of water and upon the distant shore

Men and trucks and horses not German and not ours

No bridge to cross but at the dock a boat securely tied

We blew the chain and rowed like demons for the other side.

But when we stepped up on the land oh Jesus what a sight

Blackened bodies of civilians like driftwood piled high

Cut down by stray artillery -- what the hell is it all for

We knelt and cursed the cruelty and madness men call war.

Three Russians approached us, we shook hands and then embraced

Stalingrad had traced its lines of sadness on their face

Upon that field of corpses these weary happy men

Swore an oath that it must never happen again.

And then we wept and cheered and spoke in languages unknown

They poured us Russian vodka by god we drank it down

We sang "The Volga Boatman" they sang "Tavern in the Town"

I never kissed so many men as on that afternoon when

We saw a burst of lilacs and the river swift and wide

And rest and welcome waiting for us on the other side

And Yanks and Reds laughed out loud to be alive at the Elbe.

But no sooner were we stateside than the cold war headlines read

Commies in the unions commies under every bed

Hurrah the Nazi devil's down long live the devil Red

And not one word about the oath we swore amongst the dead.

There are kids today who'll tell you we fought Russia in the war

There are armchair heroes set to settle some old score

There are profiteers and pushers primed to send young men once more

To blow themselves to glory on some godforsaken shore.

So drape my coffin with the flag of the good old USA

Let Yanks in army khaki and Reds in Russian gray

Lower me so gently into the German clay

And speak again the oath we swore that day when

We saw a burst of lilacs and the river swift and wide

And rest and welcome waiting for us on the other side

And Yanks and Reds laughed out loud to be alive at the Elbe.

...at the Elbe

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