

Myron H.

World War and Veterans' Remembrance on Instagram – @the_dutch_historian

Basic channel information:

🔍 @the_dutch_historian (Instagram)

👤 Myron H. (Netherlands)

📅 November 2017

👥 92.000 (October 2024)

📅 Often one post per day

👉 None



Note from the editors: The history of the world wars, especially the Second World War, the remembrance of war veterans and the collection of militaria are probably one of the most widespread forms of past-related presentations or hobbies by private individuals on Instagram. While many creators intentionally aim for differentiation, political distancing and ideology-free education, the boundaries to glorification, nationalism and revisionism are fluid. Whereas this was a reason for us not to include certain history-related communities or accounts in our interviews, we have decided to cover the commemoration of the world wars and veterans, as they represent a major part of history on social media. We are aware that we are dealing with a fine line here, one that requires further research, also involving dialogue with the creators.

What is your professional background and in which field do you primarily work?

I am a mechanic in the technical service of the bottling plant of a beer brewery. I maintain, inspect, and repair conveyors for example. I am a volunteer fire fighter for the company as well.

Why did you choose history as the topic for your own account?

History has always fascinated me. It started with watching movies and reading books. Years later I started collecting WWI and WWII militaria and decided to go reenacting. I eventually began to write about world war history on Instagram to share my passion with others.

Why did you choose Instagram as a platform?

When I started posting on Instagram, it was a Social Media platform which was already quite popular. I wanted to share photos with informative texts in an easy way, and Instagram seemed suitable for that. It works perfectly for reaching a lot of people at once.

What is the intention behind your account? What and whom do you aim to reach?

I have a very serious intention to share history in order to educate people about it. History should never be forgotten, as we need to learn from it. We need to learn about things we don't want to see happening again (Fig. 1). I aim to write my posts as objectively as possible to provide the best and honest content. I aim to reach as many people as possible who like WWI and WWII history, but also people interested in history in general.



Fig. 1: Collaboration post with the German war cemetery in Ysselsteyn.¹

“This cemetery in Ysselsteyn contains the graves of almost 32,000 people. Although the majority consists of conscripted German soldiers, supporters of NS organisations, such as SS and hundreds of Dutch collaborators, including over 1,500 war criminals, are also buried here.

In the visitor centre you will find interesting information and history about the military cemetery and the buried. Striking is the high peak at the young ages when looking at the age statistics. More than 10% of all those buried here are boys aged 18 and 19 years old. In addition, there are also more than 1,100 boys aged 16 and 17 years old, and many people in their early twenties. They make up the largest part of all buried at this military cemetery. The second graph shows the age categories of my account's followers. With the exception of an outlier, it is interesting to see how the values correspond somewhat.

This post is in collaboration with the German War Cemetery in Ysselsteyn. We agreed to cover the young population group buried here as subject of this collaboration. This will be done by three separate posts with examples of some young soldiers: Bernard Kolthoff, 23, buried with his brother Bruno, 25; Richard Stocker, 19; and Walter Hilgers, 18.

¹ @the_dutch_historian/@oorlogsbegraafplaats, Instagram-Post, 5.9.2023, www.instagram.com/p/CwznqsrNVrq/

Fig. 1 (continued)

Disclaimer: The Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge commemorates all the dead of both world wars and victims of tyranny. Only in a few cases we know enough of these people to judge the morality behind their actions, but we know Germany started the war and committed many war crimes. Even the dead who committed crimes have the right to a grave – every death in war should be a call to an incitement to peace. The name books in the visitor's centre contain the personal details of the dead, and serve only as documentation. The deeds or personal backgrounds of the deceased men are not taken into consideration."

Have the goals and content of your account changed over time?

My goals and aims are still the same as I had envisioned them in 2017. My content did see some changes. For example, I started to write longer texts and to use more attractive photos. I also keep trying to improve the quality of my posts and to make them look more and more professional. Think about using correct grammar and punctuation, which makes reading long posts enjoyable. After writing my posts, my girlfriend usually reads my texts, and corrects what's necessary.

How do you decide which topics to address and which ones not to?

Usually, I choose my topics randomly or I come across topics that interest me, but about which I know little yet. Sometimes topics are recommended by my followers. But I will not share political related content – such as about Hitler or the Waffen SS. Such posts usually lead to overextensive discussions. Further, political posts related to (German) WWII topics are often not tolerated (by Instagram). I have chosen to avoid such content to stay within the community guidelines.

What is your process for researching and creating content? How long does it usually take for a post?

I often do a lot of research in books and online articles to create posts. Sometimes I only find a bit of text, sometimes a lot. Summarising a large amount of information often takes a lot of time. I don't want to leave out important information for example. It can last from 15 min to over 60 to 90 min. These posts always come with some interesting photos, with which I try to attract the attention of my followers.

I carefully select or create the best images which fit with the post's topic. I usually find these pictures on the internet and on Pinterest. Sometimes I also visit historical places and take my own photos for my posts. It is possible that some photos can be sensitive to some people (wounded people), portraying the horrors of war. These will of course be marked, advising the viewer's discretion.

What aspects are particularly important to you when creating posts? Do you pay attention to academic accuracy?

Historical posts have to be as historically/academically accurate and objective as possible in my eyes. To find out if information is accurate, I compare different sources to each other. Only when I am sure facts can be confirmed, I'll use them for posts. I won't use any hearsay stories. This research work is usually greatly appreciated by my followers. When I use sources (websites, books, historians, etc.), I often mention these in my posts, especially when I use one source in particular. Sometimes a lot of sources contain the same information, which makes it hard to find the original source. Then sources are not mentioned. It is also possible that photos are colorised and then the coloriser will be mentioned as well.

In what ways does your content differ from academic presentations of history in books, journals, or even digital platforms?

I share history from Allied as well as from Axis countries and I try to find a balance in between them. You often see media/platforms choosing one side, but I prefer to show the history of the world wars as a whole. Finding a balance is what makes a post good and trustworthy.

Have you ever refrained from covering a topic due to fear of reactions or platform limitations?

Yes. It is really a risk to share photos/topics with/about swastikas, other political symbols and words, and photos of notorious people (e.g. Hitler, Himmler, Göring, and other members of the NSDAP). These are not tolerated on the Instagram platform. Although sharing history should not be censored, I have to be careful with what I post. Hence this is why some historically important topics (mentioned above)

cannot always be (completely) covered. Unfortunately, this way we cannot always learn from the hard facts of our past.

How do you receive feedback from the community? How much effort do you put into community management?

I have a fantastic community which greatly encourages me to continue doing what I like. Seeing how appreciated my work is, is truly amazing. I usually receive feedback in the comment section, but also via Direct Message or even personal. And just like making good posts, I find it important to be interactive with my community, too. I take the time to respond to as many comments/messages as possible daily, usually to answer questions and to share even more information. I am also critical in managing the comments: I don't approve hate speech as well as racist and other unwanted comments. These will be removed, and the user usually blocked from my account.

What possibilities for development and improvement do you see for yourself and your content? And what about historical content in general on Instagram?

I keep trying to improve the quality of my posts as often as I can. I also wish to create an even bigger audience to share my passion with. The more people learn about history, the better we get educated about things we don't want to happen again. Sharing historical content seems to be limited on Instagram. As I mentioned before, some topics can simply not be covered. I hope we won't be limited too much in what we want to share. Besides that, I hope people will get more interested in history and/or even decide to share history as well.