

The



Star

Issue 63

"We Speak Their Names"

December 2011

Was it a Decoy for FDR?

Crash Site Found But Mystery Still Surrounds Flight's Purpose



AWONer Judy Woodard, left, and Betsy Cowan hold Woodard's 48-star American flag at the crash site of Woodard's father's plane in South America. The flag draped the casket containing the remains of the passengers and crew when they were interred as a group at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery near St. Louis, MO, in 1948.

by Judith A. Dally Woodard

An airplane crash on January 15, 1943, was the worst air disaster in the western hemisphere up to that date. My father, Capt. Benjamin H. Dally Jr., was the pilot of that C-54. He was on loan from TWA to the Air Transport Command (ATC).

All 35 persons aboard perished when it went down in swampy land near the northern coast of Dutch Guiana (now Suriname) in South America, about 25 miles ENE of Paramaribo. His route from Washington, D.C., to Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana), and then to Casablanca went through Miami, Trinidad, and Natal, Brazil. Some passengers planned to continue on to other parts of Africa or India.

The cause of the crash is still unknown. It could have been sabotage, an explosion after the number four engine started to burn, a fuel transfer problem, or something else. The flight was a secret mission that even today remains classified. Reports are still redacted by one or more government agencies. The question is, and always has been, WHY? Why is it still clouded in mystery?

Nonetheless, I have been able to learn several facts. My father's secret mission had some correlation with President Franklin

AWON'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

≈ SPECIAL COVERAGE ≈

THIS ISSUE HONORS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF AWON WITH A RECAP OF AWON'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE CENTER SECTION. PLEASE VISIT AWON.ORG FOR MORE PHOTOGRAPHS AND HISTORY ABOUT AWON.

...continued on page 23

Missing Email Alert!

If your name is listed below, AWON does not have your current email address. Please contact AWON Database Manager Gerry Morenski at dutiem@comcast.net immediately so you can continue to receive AWON reminders, the e-Star, and other AWON news.

Stephanie Abbott
Linda Stillberger Arrington
Terry Roy Barrett
Cheryl Lirette Clark
Janet Stout Cotton
George Errold Cropley
Joyce Love Crosslin
Thomas Vernon Dooley
Lorraine Groff Dullea
Larry Greer
Suzanne Lord Iacaboni
Carol Joie Ticknor Heller
Nadeanne Queen Kleinman
Richard J. Kustra
LaVerne Wilson Melton
Teddie Neis

Sally Oesterline
John Netzer Parlman
James Joseph Pollick
Barbara Sheridan Pulice
Tom McKim Roy
Brian Ryder
Adam Shapiro
Billie Faye Stowe Sims
Carla Reese Stevenson
Evelyn Evison Sheppard
Darlene Smith
William Tschirhart
Patricia Finn Thornton
Lloyd N. Unsell
Stephen R. Wiist
Linda Woolsey

Inside:

Features

Smallest Details	5
Meeting a 'Red Tail'	7
Orphan Museum Display	8
Indianapolis Retreat	9
2012 AWON Conference	10-11
AWON 20 th Anniversary	14-18
German Witness	19

Departments

New Members	4
AWON Connections	12-13
AWON Board News	26
...and much, much more!	



AWON FOUNDER

Ann Bennett Mix

AWON OFFICERS

President

Ed Peters

Vice President

Gerry Conway Morenski

Secretary

Judy Geis Hoffman

Treasurer

Norm Burkey

AWON DIRECTORS

Norma Nicol Hamilton

Judy Hathaway

Kathy Le Comte

Bonnie Oates

Jerry Pinkerton

AWON ADMINISTRATION

Database Manager Gerry Morenski

Pub. Relations vacant

Bookstore Manager Walt Linne

The Star Editor Kathy Le Comte

Asst. Editor vacant

Webmaster Rik Peirson

ListServ Moderators Judy Hathaway,
Judy Hoffman

www.awon.org

Email us at: awon@aol.com

The Star is a quarterly publication of the American WWII Orphans Network (AWON), a nonprofit 501 (c) 3, nonpolitical, public service organization, serving the children of U.S. servicemen killed in WWII. *The Star* is published and mailed from Springfield, Illinois. ISSN 1941-370X (print) 1941-3769 (online). Copyright 2011 by the American WWII Orphans Network. All rights reserved.

Issue #63 1M (12-11)

'New' Christmas Letter Reveals More Than Father's Last Words

by Janie Weekley McPherson

Recently I discovered a treasure for my brother - and for myself - that has given me a glimpse into my daddy's heart and has helped form a memory of the man who is my hero. It is a letter my father wrote on Christmas Night, long ago.

In my imagination I picture Daddy as he wrote the letter. He's in a makeshift barracks at the Army base rest area somewhere in Germany. He's propped up in his bunk, bundled against the cold, his breath a vapor. The windows are frosted and windy gusts softly whistle around the corners of the building. Inside, men are huddled around a small heater and

a candle offers a soft glow. The tinny static of a radio is playing *White Christmas* or *Silent Night* as memories of Christmases past hover like a wistful spirit.



Sgt. Tommy Weekley Family

Dad had just been released from the hospital after being wounded in combat. In a few days he was on the front lines again. Missing his family far away, and realizing there was a great chance he

would not make it home, he penned this poignant letter on that snowy, bitterly cold Christmas night to his little three-year-old boy. A month after Christmas my dad, Sgt. Tommy Weekley, was wounded again, and less than two months later he was killed by a sniper in Nuremberg, Germany.

Memory

O memory! thou midway world
'Twixt earth and paradise,
Where things decayed and loved
ones lost
In dreamy shadows rise,
And, freed from all that's earthly,
vile,
Seem hallowed, pure and bright,
Like scenes in some enchanted
isle
All bathed in liquid light.
(from Abraham Lincoln's poem,
Memory)

Somewhere in Germany, Christmas Night 1944 . . .

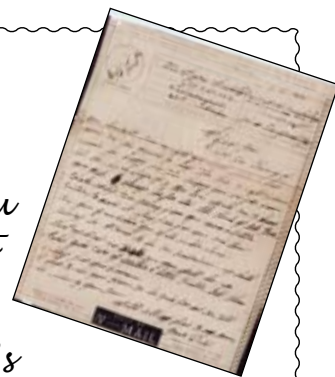
My Dear Son

To say I'm thinking of you tonight. This is the night you will learn to love more as the years go by. It's the night everyone should be happy and I'm happy you are free from all the hardships of a war torn world and I know you will always be, for it's the Land of the Free. That's why I'm away from you, Mom and little sister, to make it stay free for you and them. As you grow older you will understand. Always be proud to be an American, uphold that which is right and you will be so. Take good care of Mother and little sister, tell them Daddy loves you every one.

I hope to see you soon, so be good for me and I'll be seeing you Son.

With all my love to my son,

Your Dad



Welcome New Members

Gerald Hayes, FL, son of CPL John L. Silver, Marines
Norman Mayes, AZ, son of ILT Norris E. Mayes, Army
Carrie Lane, CA, dau of Franklyn S. Taylor, Navy
Peggy Blackburn Meyers, CA, dau of T/SGT George R. Blackburn, Marines
Henry Thompson, ND, son of PVT Henry Bender, Army
Lora Jaszewski, VA, dau of TEC5 William C. Hutchinson, Army
Diane Ochocki, MN, dau of PVT Arthur W. Lucht, Army
Diane Zawalich, NJ, dau of SGT Anthony P. Tastensen, Army
William Phillips, VA, brother of ILT Roger N. Phillips, Army
Jerry Johnson, FL, son of PFC Wesley V. Johnson, Army
Katherine Ochal, NY, niece of SGT Thaddeus L. Tanski, Army
Kenneth Andrus, WA, son of PVT Woodrow D. Andrus, Army

(new members since the September issue of *The Star*)

New Sign Explains Gold Stars at Memorial

In February a sign was added to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. The sign, titled, *The Price of Freedom*, explains the significance of the gold stars on the Freedom Wall, perhaps the memorial's most recognized feature.

The sign was added at the instigation of the American Gold Star Mothers (AGSM). According to their website, AGSM member Ruth Stonesifer attended a White House Mother's Day lunch in 2010 where another guest asked about the meaning of gold stars. In her explanation, Stonesifer noted the confusion she frequently sees in visitors at the memorial.

Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, overheard the conversation and asked what could be done. Stonesifer suggested a sign. By the time of the White House Memorial Day breakfast, the sign had been approved and a design underway. In February 2011, a group from AGSM dedicated the sign. It reads:



The Price of Freedom. Freedom Wall holds 4,048 gold stars. Each gold star represents one hundred American service personnel who died or remain missing in the war. The 405,399 American dead and missing from World War II are second only to the loss of more than 620,000 Americans during our Civil War.

AWON is proud of its own connection to the Freedom Wall. AWON Founder Ann Mix moved to the Washington, D.C. area in 1999 to "keep an eye" on the memorial's development and was instrumental in influencing the memorial's designer, Friedrich St. Florian, to change his original concept of a cenotaph to represent the war dead. Instead, Ann suggested the use of gold stars, which St. Florian adapted into the wall of stars. AWON was among the VIP organizations invited to the memorial's dedication in 2004, and that day Ann Mix proudly stood with other dignitaries who made the memorial possible.

Thanks to Norma Nicol Hamilton for alerting *The Star* to the AGSM website story.

American WWII Orphans Network

Smallest Details Have Lasting Impression After 'The Telegram'

by Reda Weil Reynolds

Articles written by AWON members usually recount the research of and travels to places where our fathers fought and died. My story is seen through the eyes of the little girl whose daddy never came home to pick her up and enfold her with hugs and kisses. I hope it resonates with my AWON sibs.

My father, PFC John Weil, was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1912. He emigrated to the United States in 1936 to escape Nazi persecution. His father, my grandfather, had been sent to Buchenwald concentration camp. John married my mother, whom he met in New York, and they had two daughters.

Our apartment was at 820 West End Avenue, on the corner of West End Avenue and 100th Street in Manhattan. The apartment building is still there. My father joined the Army and was sent to Europe. He died on January 19, 1945, in the Battle of the Bulge, while riding in a jeep that hit a land mine. Because he was fluent in both German and English, his mission was to interrogate German prisoners of war.

One night Mommy tucked us into bed and kissed us good



PFC John Weil and daughter, Reda

night. Susie, my little sister, slept in a crib but I slept in a big kid's bed because I was already five and in kindergarten. Suddenly, I woke up when I heard people talking. I found Mommy crying in the hall. There were two men with her. She showed me a piece of paper called a telegram. It was yellow and had words stuck to it. Mommy told me it said that Daddy had been killed when a jeep he was riding in blew up.

Soon, Aunt Bea and Uncle Al, my mother's aunt and uncle, came to our apartment. My mother called them because they lived near us. My grandmother died before I was born so Aunt Bea was my surrogate grandmother. Aunt Bea put me back to

bed. I went to school the next day.

Some months later, I sat cross-legged on my bed trying to memorize the three tables for tomorrow's arithmetic test. Arithmetic was not my favorite subject. My eyes wandered around the room. Looking out of the window, I watched sign painters on a swaying scaffold repainting the Coca-Cola sign on the brick wall across the alley from our apartment.

As I tried to focus on the book in my lap, I happened to look at the top of my dresser across the room. Something was missing. At first I couldn't figure out what it was. Everything had shifted slightly. Most of my favorite things were still there — my comb and brush set, the white leather jewelry box, the lamp with the three bears and Goldilocks on the bottom. But where was the framed leather photo of my daddy in his Army uniform and the fatigue cap he gave me just before he left me and never came back, not even for my sixth birthday party?

I jumped off the bed, ran across the room, and looked under the dresser. I opened the dresser drawers, searching under piles of carefully

...continued on page 6

...Details, from page 5

folded underwear, pajamas, and shirts. Nothing. I dragged a chair to the closet and climbed on it so I could reach the shelf above the neatly arranged dresses and coats. Still nothing. I tried to put the clothes back the way they had been. I never asked Mommy about the missing picture and cap. I never asked anyone.

Maybe my daddy never existed. I can remember only a few things — going sledding with him at Riverside Park on my Flexible Flyer, and a trip on a double-decker bus to visit his work. My father worked in downtown Manhattan on Leonard Street for my mother's father's menswear manufacturing company. I remember riding in the freight elevator at his work and collecting pens and pencils.

Every night I'd go into Mommy and Daddy's room to wait for the first star to appear over the building across the alley from our apartment. Then, very softly, I'd sing:

*Star light, star bright
First star I see tonight
I wish I may
I wish I might
Have the wish
I wish tonight*

BRING MY DADDY HOME

I got a new daddy when I was seven and a new baby sister when I was eight. I guess we were moving on.

Lyons Signs Book at New National Infantry Museum

AWON Associate Member Col. Calvin (Jerry) Lyons, USA (ret.), author of *If These Stones Could Talk*, available in the AWON Bookstore, had the privilege of signing copies of his book at the new National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, GA, in September.

One of those getting an autographed copy was Col. Ralph Puckett Jr., USA (ret.). Puckett led the 8th Army Ranger Company in the Korean War which famously captured and held Hill 205. One night he was wounded three times. He was dragged nearly unconscious down the hill under small arms fire, and was hospitalized for nearly a year for his wounds. He was awarded two Distinguished Service Crosses, two Silver Stars, and five Purple Hearts for his service in Korea and Vietnam.

The museum, located just outside the entrance checkpoint to Fort Benning, is one of the most outstanding military museums in the country, if not the world, Lyons says. In addition to



Col. Jerry Lyons, left, visits with and signs a book for Col. Ralph Puckett Jr., USA (ret.).

exhibits inside the museum, there also is an exact replica of a World War II Company Street with Company Headquarters, barracks, supply room, mess hall, and General Patton's headquarters. The museum is now the location of most graduations for the infantry school such as basic infantry, OCS, infantry officer advanced classes, etc. It has a book and gift shop with uniform items, clothing, books, CDs, DVDs and more. There is also an I-MAX Theater.

Within a short drive of Fort Benning are the Calloway Gardens and the winter White House where President Roosevelt died.

"All in all, a long weekend in Columbus and Fort Benning is well worth the trip," says Lyons.

Member Meets Celebrated Airmen, First Fellow Orphans at Reunion

By Roger Connor

In mid-September AWONer Dave O'Sullivan posted on the AWON ListServ that he would be in San Diego in a few days for a reunion of the 485th Bomb Group, and invited any local AWONers to meet him at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. My wife and fellow AWONer, Sharon, and I took him up on the offer and met him September 30 in the hotel lobby for what we thought would be a pleasant hour of conversation.

Just as we were wrapping up our chat Dave's wife, Jacquie, came to tell us that several of the Tuskegee airmen of the 332nd Fighter Group were in attendance as honored guests and that we were invited to join them for a special dinner in about thirty minutes! Dave and Jacquie invited us to share their dinner table with several other members of their family. We were honored that Dave's father-in-law, Arthur Kain, a member of the 485th, and his wife, Valerie, were at our table.

The 332nd, known as the "Red Tails" because the tails of their aircraft were painted bright red, escorted heavy bombers of the 15th Air Force during missions. The bomber crews always were relieved and grateful to see their red-tailed guardian angels flying alongside to protect them from Nazi fighters.

But the men of the 485th Bomb Group and

the 332nd Fighter Group had never met each other in person until a severe storm forced the bombers to land at the 332nd fighter base in Italy, where they were stranded for five days. During that time the men of the two groups interacted in ways that would not have been possible in the United States because of segregation. They forged bonds of mutual respect and friendship which have endured all these years. It was the first experience of integration in the Army Air Corps.

After dinner we were treated to the premier of a documentary about this shared experience, with an introduction by Tom Brokaw. Photographers and

news people from NBC were all over the place all evening, interviewing men from both groups. A few days later the event was featured on the "NBC Evening News," with an introduction by Brian Williams. Mr. Kain appeared in both the documentary and the newscast. Additionally, Lucasfilm (think *Star Wars*) was also present to photograph and interview both groups in conjunction with the film, *Red Tails*, to be released in January 2012 starring Cuba Gooding Jr.

And if that wasn't enough excitement and surprise, we met another war orphan, Jolene Veal Stockton, whose father was part of the 485th Bomb Group. We hope she'll join our AWON family. By the way, Jolene, Sharon and I are the first war orphans Dave has met in person!



Roger Connor, Dave O'Sullivan, and Sharon Crowley Connor pose with 332nd FG crew chief Levi H. Thornhill at the 485th BG reunion.

AWONers Create Display on Orphan Experience for Museum

by Paula Evans Baker

Six orphans of the 35th Division attended the division association's reunion in Kansas City, MO, this fall. All are members of AWON.

One of the highlights of the reunion was the orphans' first viewing of their display in the new 35th Division Association Museum in Topeka, KS. It is believed that the 35th museum is the only division museum to tell the story of Gold Star families.

The display was developed by AWONers Marilyn Bowers Jensen and Paula Evans Baker at the request of the museum's board of directors. The pair discussed the concept, wrote the copy, and collected photos of artifacts. Marilyn worked with a Denver artist to divide the concept into panels that were shipped to the museum. The panels cover the back wall of the display, representing the WWII orphans' story, both in general and specific to the 35th Division orphans. Topics covered in the 11-panel exhibit include *Our Story: Widows, Orphans, and Families of WWII*; *The Draft*; *Last Photo*; *The Telegram*; *Temporary Overseas Military Cemeteries*; *The Last Letter Home*; *35th Division WWII Veteran*, and *Purple Hearts*.

More than 20 people submitted photographs or photocopies of artifacts for the exhibit, including many AWON members. The first panel includes a photo of AWON members holding photos of their fathers in front of the wall of stars at the National WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Another highlight of the reunion was the presence of ten visitors from France, Belgium, Luxembourg and The Netherlands. They represented support groups for the 35th Division in their countries. AWONer Pat Rowe Cook moderated their panel discussion about their many activities. One visitor adopted the grave of 35th Division member Tech. Sgt. Donald Giles who is buried at the



Standing in front of the 35th ID WWII Orphans display is, from left, Jim Copeland, Pat Rowe Cook, Marilyn Bowers Jensen, Paula Evans Baker, John Paskey and Maggie Stein Fenstermacher.

Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial near Margraten. The adopter met Giles' daughter and visited Giles' home town in Nebraska before returning to The Netherlands.

Marilyn and Paula also received certificates of appreciation from the 35th Division executives for their "truly outstanding coordination" of the international visitors' participation in the reunion.

Marilyn and Paula are founders and co-chairs of the Division's International Relations committee. They also serve on the Executive Board, along with AWONers Maggie Fenstermacher and Jim Copeland. Another AWON orphan board member, Victoria Ramiriz Frisenda, was unable to attend the reunion. AWON Associate Member Ben Weber, nephew of Brig. Gen. E.B. Sebree of the 35th Division and "Task Force Sebree," also attended. Ben represented his uncle's family when the latter was inducted into the 35th Division Hall of Fame.

The 35th Division Association welcomes families of the 35th "Santa Fe" Division into full membership. The division supported AWON with a \$1,000 donation several years ago.

AWON Board Meeting in Indianapolis

The AWON Board of Directors met in Indianapolis, IN, Oct. 7-9, for its biannual retreat.

The in-person meeting allows directors to discuss AWON plans and projects in more detail than during the regularly-held teleconference meetings. The face-to-face meeting also fosters working relationships.

Topics discussed during two days of meetings included future planning for AWON, the AWON Archives, the 2012 National AWON Conference, improving the dues payment process, and some regular business items.

The board also was given a tour of the American Legion Headquarters, where the meeting was held, and the AWON office, which the Legion kindly makes available to AWON.

The October meeting was the last board meeting for the year. The next board meeting is by teleconference in January. The minutes from the October meeting will appear in the March issue of *The Star*.



AWON Archivist Ann Whelan O'Connor, left, showing the board some of the materials in the AWON Archives.



Top and above: members of the AWON Board of Directors and other AWON members at the two-day meeting. Below: AWONer Barb Kelly hosted a dinner for the board and other AWON members and family.





2012 AWON National Conference Celebrating 20 Years

Embassy Suites Indianapolis - Downtown
110 West Washington Street
part of the Hilton family of hotels

The newly renovated, all-suite hotel is located in the heart of downtown Indianapolis. It's connected to Circle Centre Mall and within walking distance to other restaurants, shopping and local sites. AWON's special rate is \$129 plus tax per night for a king or two double beds, a pull-out sofa and other amenities. Room includes a complimentary daily cook-to-order hot breakfast and evening cocktail reception. Parking is \$21 per night.

For Reservations

Call (317) 236-1800 and ask for Reservations, or 800-Embassy (800-362-2779). Mention **AWON 2012-IC** block to get the AWON rate. Rooms also can be booked online at www.indianapolisdowntown.embassysuites.com. Use group code **AWO**.

Reservation cutoff date is September 18, 2012

The closest airport is the Indianapolis International Airport (IND)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

AWON National Conferences are successful because of the volunteers who plan, coordinate and carry out the various conference activities. Conference committees meet by teleconference once a month leading up to the conference. Listed below are the committees. If you are interested in volunteering, contact Walt Linne at (317) 359-8064 or wlinne@iupui.edu and indicate which area/s you would like to be involved with. Thanks!

Walt Linne and Barb Kelly
2012 AWON National Conference Co-chairs

Awards
Banquet
Bookstore
Budget
Conference Program Schedule
Emcee
Fathers Digital Frame
Grandchild Readers
Hotel Arrangement/Travel
Logo and Graphics
Memorial Ad Sales
Memorial Services
Missing Man Table

Nametags
Newcomer Coordinator
Printed Program
Publicity
Raffle
Registration
Registration Desk
Roster
Sharing Circles
Speakers
Special Events
Spouse Coordinator
Transportation

Welcome Get-Together

Registration Form
Celebrating 20 Years 2012 AWON National Conference
Indianapolis, Indiana October 19-21 2012
Please return by August 1, 2012

Member Name: _____
Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Father's Name _____
Guests: (name and relationship to member and if a veteran): _____

Is this your first AWON Conference? (circle one) yes no

☐ I do NOT want registration information listed in the conference roster. (check box if desired)

Do you have special needs? (If so, please indicate on next space) yes no

Are you driving to the conference? yes no

Would you be willing to shuttle others to events? yes no

Please indicate choice and number of banquet entrees: beef _____ chicken _____
fish _____ vegetarian _____

Registration Fee

(includes banquet)

Note: Conference registration fee is reduced in celebration of AWON's 20th Anniversary

Active Member	\$125 / \$75 deposit	\$ _____
Inactive Member	\$150 / \$75 deposit	\$ _____
First Guest	\$75 / \$50 deposit	\$ _____
Add'l Guests w/banq.	\$65 / \$50 deposit	\$ _____
Add'l Guests no banq.	\$30 / \$15 deposit	\$ _____

Total registration fee/deposit enclosed: \$ _____

Must be returned by August 1 and paid in full by August 15

Name Tag Information (please print clearly)

Name (include maiden name) and State of Residence: _____

Name of Spouse attending: _____

Name of Mother attending: _____

Other guests attending (designate if veteran): _____

Serviceman's name: _____ Branch of Service _____

rank first middle last
KIA or MIA (circle one) Date KIA/MIA _____ Country KIA/MIA _____

Mail registration form with check or money order payable to **AWON** to:

AWON 2012 Conference
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216

AWON Connections

Pictures and Stories of Members
Gathering Around the Country



we been lucky enough to make each other's acquaintance," notes Rondy. "Our mothers would have certainly benefited from that as well." Mary and Rondy, above, toured a winery in Geneva, Ohio. "Mary's middle name is her father's first name - I just love that," adds Rondy. "How lucky for her to carry his first AND last names through life." *Rondy*



Gerry Morenski of Massachusetts visited her son, John, in Seattle this summer, as well as fellow Washington State AWONers Barry Barr-Finch and Judi Kramer. They met at Seattle's Veterans' Museum where they took a brief tour. Afterward they had lunch across the street at the Seattle Art Museum. Gerry was in town not only to visit with her son, but to catch the Seattle Mariners - Boston Red Sox series. Pictured from left are John, Gerry, Barry and Judi. *Barry*

This summer Rondy Elliott had the pleasure of spending time with two fellow AWONers. Phyllis Fish and Rondy, top, were put in touch after Roger Connor discovered they live near each other in North Carolina. The ladies enjoyed a lovely lunch with stories and photographs. Rondy also spent time with the first orphan she ever met before joining AWON. Mary Lawrence O'Brien grew up a mere 40 miles from Rondy, but neither they, nor their mothers, knew about each other. "We often muse about how our childhoods would have been enriched had



On a "Bucket List" quest, Bill Chiodo of New Hampshire traveled through parts of Montana,

American WWII Orphans Network

Wyoming, the Dakotas and Canada this summer. Along the way he had lunch with Nancy Sue Johnson in Missoula, Montana. "He emailed me several times with his location and approximate time he would be in Missoula," Nancy Sue explains. "I was able to work in lunch in between a couple clients and we met at Cracker Barrel and had a great visit." They talked about their dads, AWON, and the many friends and brothers and sisters they have in common. Bill also delivered a hug from AWONer Walt Linne all the way from Indianapolis. Nancy Sue and Bill are pictured above next to their cars with Gold Star license plates. By the way, Bill now can say he has visited all 50 states. *Nancy Sue*



Nine members of the SoCal Regional AWON group met in San Diego in October. Everyone shared a project or experience they are presently or recently involved in. Some of the topics we talked about regarding our fathers were battles on land, in the air and on the sea in both the European and Pacific Theaters, overseas cemeteries and memorials, personal memorials to our loved ones, and genealogy research into our fathers' families. As usual, members brought memorabilia and materials relevant to their presentations. Afterwards, Vic Muller showed us his personally-designed Blue Star automobile license plate in honor of his brother. Pictured, from left, are Bob and Linda Porter, Ann Pogue, Dale Roybal, Barbara Smith, Eleanor Simmonds, Sharon Connor, Vic Muller and Roger Connor. *Roger*



The first Northern Texas AWON Gathering covering North Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, was held at a Dallas Olive Garden in October. The restaurant provided a separate room and additional tables for displaying photos and scrapbooks. Even the restaurant staff looked at the memorabilia. "During our long, leisurely lunch we talked about our fathers and our lives without them," explains Patty Temte. Pictured above, from left, are Ed and Mary Alice Renner, Gail Brown, Jerry Pinkerton, Beth Carpenter, Mary Nyugen, Bonnie Rudolph, Patty and Jerry Temte, Jenae Pinkerton Thrift and Judy Pinkerton. Another Texas gathering is slated for April 2012. *Patty*

Raffle! Raffle!! Raffle!!!

Items needed for the
2012 AWON National Conference Raffle

Items can be anything, but in the past they have represented the home state of the giver. For example, an assortment of Wisconsin cheese.

Just bring your raffle contribution to the conference!



Founding of AWON

Founder

Ann Bennett Mix

First Founders

The following people contributed significant funds and time getting AWON started:

Anne Moloney Black

Frank Burtnett

Clatie R. Cunningham III

Nicholas D. Etcheverry

Clint Frederick

Susan Hadler Johnson

John George Linne

Walter Paul Linne

Lorin D. McCleary III

A. Eric Rosen

Mary Swaggerty Slowey

Samuel V. Tannenbaum

Jeffrey Luckey Ward

The end of the year is a time for reflecting on the past. As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the American WWII Orphans Network Mix in 1991. Here are the goals that were set for

Goals of the American WWII Orphans Network

To register every person who lost a father in WWII and to try to obtain concrete statistics on them. To provide a locating service for those orphaned fathers for people who are trying to locate them. To provide information on upcoming events, queries and anything else. To find other records which would pertain to our fathers. To keep orphans of foreign wars and the widows and orphans of the network members in touch with one another and to help fathers alive, to cherish and do our part to maintain the memory. Never forget the cost of war so that there may be peace.

I think it can be safely said that AWON has met and exceeded its work it set out to do but also looks for new challenges in the short years:

Significant AWON Events and Accomplishments

- AWON Founder Ann Mix begins search for other orphans
- First official meeting of AWON held in Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Senator Bob Dole becomes AWON National Patron
- AWON First Founders meet in Washington, D.C.
- First AWON National Conference held in Seattle, WA
- AWON launches its quarterly newsletter, its first issue
- AWON creates and maintains only national registry of WWII orphans
- In 1996 Mix publishes *Touchstones*, the publication of their WWII research
- National Personnel Records Center staff gain knowledge when they witness emotional 1998 AWON visit when they witness emotional 1998 AWON visit when they witness emotional 1998 AWON visit
- In 2001 Mix attends presidential signing of law
- AWON influences design of National World War II Museum with other VIPs
- Member donations collectively make AWON a major contributor to the National World War II Museum
- AWON history published by Turner Publishing Company
- AWON office opens in Indianapolis
- In 2010 AWON contributes to creation of the National WWII Museum

Congratulations AWON for all that you have accomplished

Years of Reaching Out - 2011

st, and wondering where the time has gone. This year
WWII Orphans Network (AWON), founded by Ann Ben-
rth for AWON in its first newsletter:

WWII Orphans Network

*and enter them in our database, along with the name
of the exact number of children who lost their fa-
s trying to find family members and war buddies and
information on how to locate veterans records and
ers. To publish a newsletter with issues of interest,
ng else of interest to our network. To support vet-
f all wars. To locate all memorials across the U.S.
ion accessible to the network and the public. To put
ave annual get togethers. To keep the memory of our
the freedom for which they gave their lives, and to
ace. AWON Newsletter, Volume I*

then exceeded its early goals. AWON continues the
es. Let's take a brief look at what we have done in 20

omplishments of the Past 20 Years:

er WWII orphans in May 1990
nton, D.C., on December 7, 1991
al Advisor
C., donating seed money to start AWON
le in 1995

st private email server, and website
istry of World War II Orphans
ation that helps AWON's growing membership begin

better understanding of the impact of their work after
members received fathers' records
creating National World War II Memorial
II Memorial and participates in its 2004 dedication

or contributor to National World War II Memorial

Company in 2005

ational Day of Remembrance of the End of WWII

ished in 20 years! Walt Linne, First Founder

AWON National Conference Timeline

1995

Sea You in Seattle
Seattle, WA

1996

A Time to Remember
Washington, DC

1998

*A Book Not Closed –
Lost in the Victory*
St. Louis, MO

2000

Journeys – Finding Our Fathers
San Diego, CA

2002

*Finding Our Fathers –
Finding Ourselves*
Branson, MO

2004

In Their Memory
Washington, DC

2006

Lone Star Conference
San Antonio, TX

2008

Healing Ourselves
Tucson, AZ

2010

The Joy of AWON
Annapolis, MD





AWON: Celebrating 20 1991 -

AWON Orphan Authors

AWON is proud of the long list of members who have published their story or uncle. Some are professional writers and filmmakers, but all their only goal was to tell their story. Congratulations to all of the

WAR ORPHAN AUTHORS

Kay Brigham, *For Those Who Love, Time is Not*

Bruce Brodowski, *The Dad I Never Knew: A War Orphan's Search for Inner Healing*

Walter Ford Carter, *No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love: A Son's Journey to Normandy*

Diana Thompson Dale (niece), *Finding Billy – An Internet Odyssey*

John Darnton, *Almost a Family*

Robert B. Ellis, *See Naples and Die*

Mary Kay Coe Fowler, *Full Fathom Five: A Daughter's Search*

Clint Frederick, *World War II, A Legacy of Letters – One Soldier's Journey*

Patricia Gaffney-Kindig, editor, *In Their Memory: American WWII Orphans Network*

Damon L. Gause, *The War Journal of Major Damon "Rocky" Gause*

Michael J. Goodwin, *Shobun – A Forgotten War Crime in the Pacific*

Susan Johnson Hadler and Ann Bennett Mix, *Lost In The Victory – Reflection of America's Orphans of WWII*

Richard Carlson Haney, *When is Daddy Coming Home?: An American Family During World War II*

Duane Heisinger, *Father Found – A Journey of Discovery*

Lois Brown Klein, *A Soldier's Daughter*

Ben McClelland, *Soldier's Son*

Years of Reaching Out - 2011 s and Film Producers

shed books or produced films about their father, grandfather
t the vast majority have no formal writing background. Their
m for overcoming the fear of a blank page — and an editor.



WAR ORPHAN AUTHORS, cont.

Bill McElvain, *In My Father's Words: Letters From a World War II Soldier*

William C. McGuire II, *After the Liberators: A Father's Last Mission, A Son's Lifelong Journey*

Ann Bennett Mix, *Touchstones – A Guide to Records, Rights, and Resources for the Next of Kin of American World War II Casualties*

Anthony Moore, *Father, Son & Healing Ghosts*

Thomas G. Ratliff, *I Can Hear the Guns Now – A WWII Story of Love and Sacrifice, and Now I Know – A War Orphan's Journey of Discovery*

Damon Rarey, *Laughter and Tears – The Art of Captain George Rarey*

Sandra Bonilla Thompson, *Love, Honor and Cherish: The True World War II Story of a Screaming Eagle and a Courageous Woman*

Huey Tyra (nephew), *Love Always, Ben*

Raymond Wood (nephew), *Or Go Down in Flames: A Navigator's Death Over Schweinfurt*

Jeff Wignall, *Farebersville 1944*

Imogene Woods, *The Ordinary Infantrymen: Heroes Then, Heroes Again*

FILMS

Terry Boettcher and Patrick Tierney, *We Speak Their Names: A Tribute to Our Fathers*

Shawnee Brittan, *Sleep My Sons – The Story of the Arisan Maru and the War in Europe*

Ondine Rarey (granddaughter) and Luigi Falorni, *Fools and Heroes*

AWON: Celebrating 20 Years of Reaching Out 1991 - 2011

Volunteers and Governance

AWON has found and served WWII orphans for the last 20 years because of the dedication of its volunteers. There have been so many volunteers over the years we can't list them all here, but we are forever in their debt. AWON as a non-profit organization also wouldn't have survived without consistent and committed governance. Listed below are AWON's past and present leaders.



AWON Founder Ann Bennett Mix

AWON Directors

Past Directors

Barry Barr-Finch, "Chickie" Shields Berry, Anne Moloney Black, Shawnee Brittan, Connie Caldwell, Bill Chiodo, Roger Connor, Rony Elliott, Nick Etcheverry, Clint Frederick, Jack Forgy, Susan Johnson Hadler, Bonnie Black Crane Hellums, Ellen Jones, Patricia Gaffney-Kindig, Judi Hollis Kramer, Jack Langston, Walt Linne, Joan Marlow, Gloria Zuccarella Layne, Maggie Malone, Lorin McCleary, Bob Meek, Jeanne Brooks Rhinehart, Gary Shields, Mike Stoddard, Sam Tannenbaum, Doni Morrison Troglio, Rik Peirson, Betty Palonen Volkan, Sandra Walker, Jeff Ward, Patty Nash Wheeler

Current Directors

Ed Peters, Norm Burkey, Judy Geis Hoffman, Norma Nicol Hamilton, Judy Webber Hathaway, Kathy Le Comte (grandchild), Gerry Conway Morenski, Bonnie Oates

Past Chairmen*

1995 – Lorin McCleary

1996 – Walt Linne

Past Presidents

1997 – Walt Linne

1998 – Jeff Ward

1999 – Nick Etcheverry

2000-2001 – Gloria Zuccarella Layne

2002-2006 – Patricia Gaffney-Kindig

2007-2009 – Judy Geis Hoffman

2010-present – Ed Peters

**The title chairman was used for the first two terms.*



AWON's first meeting



Thank you to First Founder, Past Chairman and Past Director Walt Linne for compiling the information for this salute to AWON's first 20 years. For many more historical photos and information about AWON, visit awon.org, or order a copy of the Turner AWON history from the AWON Bookstore.

Sisters Meet German Witness to Father's Crash, Burial Sites

by Stacy Crossen Roberts

Sixty-seven years ago this past October 22, my father, Lt. Col. Morris Charles Crossen, was shot down in his P-38 over Kierdorf, Germany. As a tribute to him, and in honor of those of us seeking the truth about our fathers, I would like to tell another chapter of my story from last year.

Last year my sister and fellow AWONer, Nancy Boothe, her husband, and I participated in an AWON European group tour over Memorial Day. For the first time my sister and I visited the American National Cemetery and Memorial at Ardennes to honor our dad, "Mo." We were shadowed by an American reporter for three days and she told our story in an online newspaper. Photos and references to the newspaper article are on the AWON website. A 45-second spot was also on NPR that weekend. The experience of meeting so many of you; seeing the cemetery and my father's grave for the first time; and the tributes to us by the Belgian people, royalty, and American dignitaries; is one of the very most important in my life.

One of the days that followed is another.

On June 2, me, my sister and brother-in-law, and fellow AWONer Gail Eisenhower, rented a car and drove into Germany. We stopped to honor Gail's dad in the Huertgen Forest before heading to the home of our hosts, Otto and Ulrike Pegels, in Aachen.

The following day, a church holiday there, we drove to meet Albert Trostorf, a German contact who had been helping me in my research. Prior to our trip he had located an eyewitness to my father's crash in 1944. The man was still living and in the same small town where the crash took place. Albert had arranged for us to meet him. This was to be the day.

We drove for about an hour into the coun-



From left, Stacy, Christian Esser, Gail Eisenhower, Nancy Boothe, and Otto Pegels listen as Esser describes his memory of the events following the Crossen crash.

tryside. I was with Albert in his car and the rest followed with the Pegels'. We arrived in Kierdorf about noon. Christian Esser was standing in the middle of the narrow street waiting for us. He was tall, healthy, and had a welcoming smile. He had arranged for us to join him for lunch with his wife at the only open restaurant.

Following our meal where we did our best to converse, with Albert and Otto acting as interpreters, we set out on foot to four places in the village where Mr. Esser began to tell us his story. He was 12 years old when he and some friends saw the dogfight happening in the sky. When they heard the crash they ran to see what had happened.

The first location he showed us was the place where the plane crashed. The second was where our father lay in the field. A Polish farmer stole his shoes and his papers but the Germans came soon and asked where these things were. The farmer unburied them and returned them. They had cov-

...continued on page 20

ered my father with his parachute, though some women in town took some of the silk to make clothes. The villagers made a pine box and put my father in it and pulled the box through the village on a wagon where they buried him in the Prisoner of War section of their cemetery.

The cemetery was the third place Mr. Esser took us, and we stood in the exact spot where my dad was buried. The villagers laid flowers on the grave at night for fear of being seen.

We then went to the village square where Mr. Esser said that on March 8, 1945, an American tank drove into the center and a soldier called out two questions: "Who speaks English?" and "Where is our American pilot?" A Polish farm wife named Hala was the only one who knew English and she took them to the cemetery to show them the grave. They returned two weeks later to recover his body and took it to Belgium, where he rests today.

We then went to Mr. Esser's garden house where his wife had laid out a formal coffee and tea with cakes on linens and china. He had arranged to have his eyewitness account typed out in English and signed, and had aerial maps of the area from both 1944 and present ready - all in a folder.

As we finished our visit I stood next to Mr. Esser, holding his hand, tears streaming down my face, thinking, "This is the last person to see my father alive and I am standing here next to him. How fortunate I am to have found him, for him to be the gracious person that he is, and to have so many facts to fully understand what happened."

Just as I had always wondered what really happened, Mr. Esser had always wondered about the pilot and if he had a family. He never dreamed he would know of them nor get to meet them. He lost sleep waiting for our arrival. His care and kindness were his way of apologizing for what happened. Their village had only this one experience with the fighting. We took photos and said our thanks and goodbyes.



Attending the Akin memorial service were, from left, parents Bob and Pat Armstrong, Richard and Norma Nicol Hamilton, and Dianne and John Baczynski.

AWON Remembers Loved Ones

Kristin Loveland Armstrong Akin, daughter of AWONer Patricia Behan Armstrong and Robert Armstrong, passed away September 11, 2011, after a battle with ovarian cancer. She was 51. She is survived by her husband, Richard Akin; stepson, Zachary Akin; parents; and a sister. Kristin was very proud of her grandfather, Cmdr. Austin Behan.

Norma Nicol Hamilton and Dianne Baczynski and their husbands attended a celebration of Kristin's life in November. "There were approximately 200 people at the service, but having my AWON sisters there meant the world to me," Pat posted on the AWON ListServ.

AWONer Sharon Lee "Sherrie" Huston Clark of Pella, IA, passed away September 4, 2011, following a battle with lung and liver cancer. She was the daughter of S/Sgt. William H. Huston and Wilma Lee Steadman Huston. She is survived by a son, daughter, two granddaughters, and a great-granddaughter. She was preceded in death by her husband.

Ellsworth "Mickey" Hohmann, 84, WWII veteran and husband of AWONer Margaret Fraesco Hohmann, passed away September 29, 2011, at his home in Dover, DE.



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



BOOKS

(Authors in **bold** are orphan or family members)

New! *In My Father's Words: Letters From A World War II Soldier*
by **Bill McElvain** \$16.00

____ *If These Stones Could Talk*
by Col. Calvin G. "Jerry" Lyons, USA (Ret) \$27.00

____ *The Dad I Never Knew: A War Orphan's Search for Inner Healing*
by **Bruce Brodowski** REDUCED! \$7.95

____ *Farebersville 1944*
by **Jeff Wignall** \$18.95

____ *A Soldier's Daughter*
by **Lois Brown Klein** \$17.00

____ *The Ordinary Infantrymen: Heroes Then, Heroes Again*
by **Imogene Woods** and Twelve WWII Infantrymen \$15.00

____ *Full Fathom Five: A Daughter's Search*
by **Mary Lee Coe Fowler** \$29.95

____ *Love Always, Ben*
by **Huey Tyra**, nephew REDUCED! \$3.00

____ *When Your Number's Up: Meritocracy Goes to War*
by Raymond S. Ross, PhD. \$10.00

____ *Sporty Course (bomber pilots)*
by Col. Jack Swayze \$10.00

____ *The Hotton Report (about The Battle for Hotton)*
by Robert McDonald \$13.95

____ *World War II: A Legacy of Letters - One Soldier's Journey*
by **Clinton Frederick** \$26.95

____ *In Their Memory: American WWII Orphans Network*
by Turner Publishing Company
Standard Book was \$49.95 **REDUCED! \$10.00**
Leatherbound Book was \$79.95 **REDUCED! \$25.00**

____ *The Fighting Tigers: The Untold Story Behind the Names on the Quachita Baptist University WWII Memorial*
by William Downes \$24.95

____ *The War Journey of Major Damon "Rocky" Gause*
by Maj. Damon "Rocky" Gause, foreword by **Damon L. Gause** \$21.95

____ *Love, Honor and Cherish: The True World War II Story of a Screaming Eagle and a Courageous Woman*
by **Sandra Bonilla Thompson** \$23.00

____ *Soldier's Son*
by **Ben McClelland** \$28.00

____ *No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love: A Son's Journey to Normandy*
by **Walter Ford Carter** \$24.95

____ *D-Day + 60 Years: A Small Piece of Airborne History*
by Jerome J. McLaughlin \$25.00

____ *They Also Served: Women's Stories from the World War II Era*
by Jeanie Sutton Lambright
hardcover \$35.00 softcover \$24.00

____ *Finding Billy*
by **Diana Thompson Dale**, niece \$16.95

____ *Father Found: Life and Death as a Prisoner of the Japanese in World War II*
by **Duane Heisinger** \$13.95

____ *An 8th Air Force Combat Diary*
by John A. Clark \$49.95

____ *When I See a "Forty and Eight" ... I Remember World War Two*
by Jacques Adnet, Lt. Col. USAF (ret.) \$12.00

____ *For Those Who Love, Time Is Not*
by **Kay Brigham** was \$30.00 **NOW \$16.00**

____ *Lost in the Victory: Reflections of America's Orphans of WWII*
by **Susan Johnson Hadler** and **Ann Bennett Mix** \$32.50

____ *After the Liberators: A Father's Last Mission, A Son's Lifelong Journey*
by **William C. McGuire II** \$16.95

____ *Shobun: A Forgotten War Crime in the Pacific*
by **Michael J. Goodwin** \$19.95

More AWON Merchandise and Order Form on Other Side



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



VIDEOS

____ AWON 2004 Conference & WWII Memorial Dedication \$10.00*	____ AWON 2000 Conference: Journeys - Finding Our Fathers by Justin Taylan was \$15.00 \$10.00*
____ We Speak Their Names: A Tribute to Our Fathers produced by Patrick Tierney and Terry Boettcher was \$15.00 \$10.00*	____ Sleep My Sons: The Story of the Arisan Maru by Shawnee Brittan \$30.00
	____ The War in Europe by Shawnee Brittan \$30.00

AWON Logo Products

(Items in **bold** are new)

____ Sweatshirt (circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X) \$45.00	AWON Gold Star crystal pendant (no chain included):
____ Windbreaker (blue) (circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X) \$40.00	____ Gold Star crystal pendant 1 1/8" (28mm) \$10.00
____ Denim shirt ____ short sleeve ____ long sleeve (circle size: S M L XL 2X) \$40.00	____ Gold Star crystal pendant 1 1/2" (40mm) \$20.00
____ Golf shirt ____ white ____ blue (circle size: S M L XL 2X) \$35.00	____ *AWON lapel pin \$10.00
NEW! 20th Anniversary Logo T-shirt navy \$20.00 (circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X)	____ Gold Star earrings \$20.00
____ Hat \$15.00	____ *AWON button (2 1/4 inch) \$3.00
____ Scarf (royal blue fleece) \$15.00	____ *AWON lanyard and name tag/ticket holder (4" x 6") blue with white lettering \$6.00
____ Tote bag (large) \$20.00	____ *AWON note cards w/envelopes (pkg. of 20) \$20.00
	____ *AWON bookmarks (circle amount: 1/\$1.00, 5/\$3.00, 10/\$5.00)
	____ *AWON auto magnet \$6.00
	____ *AWON holiday ornament \$10.00
	____ AWON blanket (royal blue w/gold lettering) \$30.00 (send father's name & rank (if desired) with order)

The Star NEWSLETTERS

- ____ * Individual issues \$2.00 includes P&H
- ____ * All archived issues: \$35.00 includes P&H
- ____ * Special! Most recent five issues: \$7.50 includes P&H

Ordering Information

Postage and handling: \$5 for each item. Items marked with an asterisk (*) include P&H. For multiple purchases: Up to \$40: \$9 P&H \$40-\$60: \$10 P&H Over \$60: \$12 P&H Washington State residents add 7.8% sales tax.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State/Zip: _____
Email: _____

Total Enclosed: _____

Send check or money order to:

AWON Bookstore
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
email: bookstore@awon.org

For more information and color photos go to: www.awon.org/bookstore/bookstore.html

...Mystery, from front page

Roosevelt's flight to the Casablanca Conference. Supposedly, the flight was one of three decoy flights. FDR secretly flew from Miami on a Pan Am Clipper. My father's flight was delayed there. The other two decoy ATC flights made the trip to Africa successfully. Also, there were high-ranking FBI and State Department officials on board. Many secret documents were found at the crash site that were intended for British Gen. Harold Alexander, as well as a great deal of money.

There were always stories about body parts being recovered, but those reports were varied and questionable. In 1948, my mother received a telegram stating that the remains of all 35 men would be returned for a service at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, MO. None of the other families or mine believed the one large casket contained their loved ones' remains. I still have the 48-star flag that was presented

to my mother and me. From that moment, I wanted to go to the crash site one day.

My mother, Susan D. (Hamilton) Dally, and my father fell in love when she was a registered nurse and he was a patient at Jefferson Barracks Military Hospital. She was deeply in love with him. Capt. Ben Dally Jr. graduated from Westminster College, was commissioned by the AAC, became a courier for TAT, and then a captain for TWA. He was in line for a top management job at TWA, and he was 35 years old when he died. I have no personal memory of him but I know I would have loved him with all my heart. He is my hero.

A few years ago Betsy Cowan created a website about the crash. Her grandfather, Maj. Eric M. Knight, was on the flight. He was the author of *Lassie Come Home*, *This Above All*, and other published works. Betsy and I have been in touch since the late 1990s

...continued on page 24

Clarification

In the September issue of *The Star*, an article about the 2012 AWON group tour of the Philippines mistakenly stated some incorrect biographical information about the tour leader's father.

It was written that Steve Kwiecinski's father, Sgt. Walter F. Kwiecinski, was stationed on Corregidor during the siege, survived the Bataan Death March, and spent three years as a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

Reader and AWONer Eleanor Simmonds wrote *The Star* and said Kwiecinski's participation in the Death March was nearly impossible.

"Bataan surrendered nearly a month before the surrender of Corregidor," Simmonds explained, who was 14 years old at the time and lived on Corregidor for two years prior to the war. "The Death March took place during that intervening month."

Writer Patty Temte checked over what she wrote and noted that Eleanor is correct, Kwiecinski was not on the Death March.

"He missed the Death March because he had been sent back to Corregidor the day Bataan fell. Ultimately he was captured in May and was sent to Bilibid, then to Cabanatuan, and in July 1944 boarded the *Mati Mati Maru* bound for Japan where he remained until the end of the war," Temte clarified. "I must have inferred that he had been on the Death March, but no, he was still fighting on Corregidor at that point."

This clarification does not in any way detract from tour leader Steve Kwiecinski's knowledge or expertise in leading the AWON tour.

The Star appreciates the close reading by Eleanor Simmonds, and Patty Temte's willingness to admit a mistake. Both acknowledged they wanted a clarification, "for the sake of accuracy and the interests of those of us who are descendants."

and we both are still researching the crash.

In March 2008, I received a message from Betsy that struck me and my children like a lightning bolt. A Surinamese news photographer named Dave Edhard had contacted her through her website looking for information about the crash. He was making a documentary about Suriname's involvement in WWII and wanted to include the story about the C-54 crash. Dave and Surinamese Army soldiers had gone to the crash site several weeks before and had located some of the debris with a metal detector. All of this was very exciting.

Dave invited Betsy and me to Suriname to visit the crash site. All of our travel expenses were paid by extremely generous folks in Suriname. I never believed I would get there before I died, and it truly was a surreal feeling to learn that at last I could be at the place where my father died.

My round trip included ten airports and eight flights. As the plane made its way from Miami to Trinidad, I was astonished to realize that my father had flown this very route on his final flight. I suddenly felt as though I could almost touch him. Dave and Bas Speck, one of the backers of the trip, met us in Paramaribo on April 27 and took us to our hotel.

Two days later U.S. Ambassador Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes hosted a wonderful luncheon to honor us and those who made the documentary, *Mayday in the West*. Two gentlemen at the luncheon were alive at the time of the crash, and it was fascinating to hear their memories.

The next day, we began the sad and arduous trip to the crash site. First we drove to a tiny steep dock on the broad Commewijne River. A relatively large boat took us upstream to a spot where we transferred to

a smaller boat for the downstream trip on the smaller Matapica River to the village of Bakki. Bas has rejuvenated the village and a very old school for the local children. Like other Surinamese villages, Bakki went into sharp decline after the Dutch left the surrounding plantations.

From Bakki, canoes took us downstream on Warappa Creek. The men portaged the canoes around large fish traps. We traveled north for some time before the canoes pulled in at an embankment. Then we began the difficult trek on foot through more than a mile of swamp and mangrove roots.

Finally, we reached a beautiful shallow lagoon and Dave said, "We are here." Af-

ter 65 years, I now finally stood and looked at the spot where my father, along with so many others, had died. I was completely overwhelmed by its tranquility, and relieved that it was not an ugly and turbid place. Perhaps it was a heavenly being that allowed the plane to crash there.

We were all silent for a

long time and in awe of that sacred place. I knew in my heart that it was the final resting place of those 35 men and that the remains were there. I had brought the 48-star flag from the Jefferson Barracks ceremony with me. My friend and I unfolded it and raised it by flag protocol and said our prayers and grieved. In my mind, it was the truest and ultimate tribute to my father and the other gallant men.

After we folded that old and beautiful American flag in good military order, we saw that every Surinamese man who had accompanied us had tears in his eyes. They were such good and sincere people. How does one say "thank you" enough?

After our return to Bakki, the villagers surprised us with a delicious meal they had prepared. Members of the press, as well as the U.S. ambassador, had arrived by boat.



The marker memorializing the crash victims. In front of the marker is one of the plane's propeller blades.

Locals from other villages also were there. And then, a most amazing thing. A large object was covered with upright palm leaves, which we were asked to remove. Beneath them was a beautiful monument engraved with the names of all who were on board the C-54. The wonderful people who were instrumental in creating the documentary had it made. Along with the marker was a propeller blade from the aircraft that Surinamese soldiers found underwater, flower petals that the local villagers strewn about as is their custom, and a photo of my father.

Betsy and I both gave short thank you speeches. The only thing I could think of as a token of my gratitude was to present the people of Suriname a turquoise and silver ring in the shape of a horseshoe that my fa-

ther had purchased in Albuquerque around 1939. I cannot say how many times I was told by old-timers, even in passing on the street, how grateful the Surinamese were to the United States of America during WWII. I fervently wished I could have done more.

After returning to Paramaribo completely exhausted at twilight, I, for the first time during the trip, switched on the TV in my hotel room. The image that immediately appeared on the screen was the marker with this article. It was as if my father was communicating with me in a miraculous way after all these many years.

There are hundreds of thousands of war orphans and spouses who have had sad and empty lives; unfortunately, it appears the losses will never end. My condolences and prayers are forever with all of them.

Journey to Suriname

by Judith A. (née Dally) Woodard

Eerily silent save the calls of friendly wingéd creatures

As the sun shone through tall sentinels of trees and dropped

Dappled shadows on the ponds and hallowed graves

Of men who perished long ago in this place, and now visited by daughter of Captain and granddaughter of a passenger to once more unfurl the forty-eight star flag to honor and to grieve and

To feel their presence along with the soft South American breeze.

This calm and peaceful place in beautiful Suriname does not reflect the explosive and fiery fall of the olive drab C-54 that consigned the thirty-five aboard to much too early deaths.

"A shooting star" some said.

Those valiant men in 1943 who prayed

and said, "I love you" as they fell from the star-spangled sky.

Then mourned by those at home for years and many years.

Until one recent day a message was received – a calling from afar to join a team of mighty, strong and wondrous folk of beautiful Suriname -

So generous and giving and making possible the trip.

A documentary is being made, they said To tell the story of the thirty-five To find, perhaps, the truth and unravel the mystery of that tragedy.

And so commenced the journey to the lovely, eerily silent place of shattered lives and broken dreams and to the final resting place of my father Ben.

— In remembrance of all aboard, especially my father, Captain Benjamin Hart Dally Jr., captain of the C-54 that fell to earth on January 15, 1943, in Suriname.

Guidelines for Submitting Material for Publication

- Topics considered for publication in *The Star* include, but are not limited to, unit reunions, visiting battle or crash sites, cemeteries, ceremonies, seeking or finding families and veterans, poetry, etc.
- Email copy-ready articles and pictures to the editor in Word, WordPerfect, RTF, or in the body of an email. High resolution jpeg, bitmap, gif or tiff images are preferred. Text and pictures also can be mailed. Photos returned upon request.
- Please keep text to one page (500 to 1,000 words), including pictures.
- Email short articles about resources, queries, book/movie recommendations, and general information for the List Tips column to the assistant editor.
- Preference is given to material written by and about AWON members.
- Authors retain copyright to published original writing. Permission to reprint should be obtained from the author by contacting the editor.

Kathy Le Comte, Editor
869 S. Columbia Ave.
Springfield, IL 62704-2342
(217) 787-6512
johnkath5@comcast.net

**Deadline for the
March Issue is
February 1**

AWON Board Business 21 August 2011

Treasurer Position: Jerry Pinkerton volunteered to be AWON Treasurer and will work with current treasurer **Norm Burkey** during the transition. The board accepted the revised AWON Treasurer job description.

Database Report: Database Manager **Gerry Morenski** distributed her report and noted that, often, applications are received but dues are never paid in spite of follow-up messages and telephone calls.

AWON's Digital Photos: AWON Webmaster **Rik Peirson** requested the board set a policy for handling member requests for copies of AWON's digital file of Father Photos. After discussion, the board moved that AWON's digital images of Father Photos may not be released to anyone for any reason. **Judy Hoffman** volunteered to work with Rik to write a policy on the appropriate use of AWON material, taking into consideration the use of images by AWON conference chairs and regional coordinators.

Father Posters: Lorin McCleary proposed that AWON request a National Guard unit carry AWON's Father Posters in the Washington, D.C. Memorial Day Parade. Lorin offered to coordinate. The board supported the idea and will follow up with Lorin.

Membership Committee: The board discussed the progress of the ad-hoc membership committee.

Future of AWON: Gerry will develop a list of suggestions from AWON Founder **Ann Mix** for board discussion at the board retreat in Indianapolis in October.

Board Meeting Time: Bonnie Oates has a conflict with the board's Sunday evening meeting time. The board will discuss options.

2012 AWON Conference: Penny LeGrand has been researching venues and will attend the board meeting in October. Gerry will get a status report from AWON Conference Chair **Walt Linne** and will contact Penny about the meeting hotel.

2014 AWON Conference: Barry Barr-Finch and Judi Hollis Kramer have offered to co-chair the 2014 AWON National Conference in Seattle.

AWON Archives: Norma Nicol Hamilton discussed the need for an archives mission statement. **Judy Hathaway** and Jerry Pinkerton volunteered to work with Norma to draft a statement. Norma also noted the need for an inventory of materials to be archived.

Next Board Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the AWON Board of Directors is October 8, 2011, in Indianapolis.

Judith Hoffman, Secretary

This is a condensed version of the minutes. For the complete minutes, visit awon.org.

27

Editor, The Star
869 S. Columbia Ave.
Springfield, IL 62704-2342

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage PAID
Springfield, IL
Permit No. 500

Address Service Requested

The Star

"Breaking Down the Wall of Silence"

AWON Headquarters
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
(540) 310-0750
awon@aol.com
www.awon.org



AWON Mission

To locate and bring together sons and daughters of those who died or are missing as a result of American involvement in World War II, honor the service and sacrifice of our fathers and provide information and support to these people who were orphaned by the war.

AWON Directory

Address Corrections

Gerry Morenski dutiem@comcast.net

Archives

Ann Whelan O'Connor awolaojr@earthlink.net

Bookstore

Walt Linne bookstore@awon.org

Dues

Norm Burkey normanburkey@verizon.net

First Inquiry Coordinators

Patty Temte AWON@aol.com

Janice Ott Buterbaugh janicebuterbaugh@gmail.com

Headquarters

Ed Peters edpeters2@comcast.com

ListServ Moderators

Judy Hathaway judy0305@yahoo.com

Judy Geis Hoffman jghoffman@satx.rr.com

Regional Coordinators

Barry Barr-Finch barrfinch@clearwire.net

The Star Editor

Kathy Le Comte johnkath5@comcast.net

Washington, D.C. Events

Phyllis Epstein Louis pelouis@verizon.net

Washington, D.C. Liaisons

Lee Mathis jlee123@verizon.net

Jeanine McKenzie Allen tritonmia@verizon.net

Webmaster

Rik Peirson rikp@dayone.com