

Despite Burned Service Records

Private Awarded Battlefield Promotion 55 Years After KIA

by Victor Muller



Inclement weather doesn't stop AWON family member Victor Muller from visiting his brother, PFC Joseph Muller, at Luxembourg American Cemetery.

My brother, Joseph Muller, was 19 years older than me - the oldest of four siblings. My sister, Cecilia, was 18 years older than me. I used to introduce her to my friends as my mother. She didn't care for that but we had fun with it. My next sister, Ethel, was 14 years older than me. She treated me like she was my mother. We had many arguments over the years about that.

I really did not know my brother. The only thing that I remember is in August 1944 he came to see me at summer camp. I was eight and he was 27. He was in his uniform but I don't remember our conversation. Later my sisters said he told me that I was now the man of the house and I should take care of everyone.

During World War II my mother worked for the U.S. Post Office and my father worked in a defense plant. My sisters worked in the New York Garment District making uniforms. They put their name and address inside the garments, saying that any GI was welcome to write to them, and they did receive a lot of mail, which they answered.

After my brother was KIA, my father went to the recruiting office and tried to enlist,

...continued on page 11

Inside:

Features

- 2014 Conference 2
- Memorial Day 3, 14-19
- Fathers' Burials 23-28

Departments

- AWON Connections 7-9
- New Members 13
- AWON Board News 29-30

Arrangements Underway for 2014 AWON Conference

by Barry Barr-Finch

The 2014 AWON National Conference is becoming a reality!

Conference Co-chair Judi Hollis Kramer and myself have secured the hotel — the Renaissance Seattle Hotel near Pike Place Market. It is close to the shopping and entertainment districts and features views of the mountains and Puget Sound.

The conference dates are September 4–7, with check-in on the 3rd and departure on the 8th. Conference room rates are \$129 plus tax for a king or two doubles, with free Wifi and a room refrigerator. This discounted rate will apply for the two days before the conference, September 2-3, if you want to come early and do some sightseeing. The conference committee is working on some tour options.

One option the conference committee is considering is an Alaskan cruise in conjunction with the conference. If you think you might be interested in the cruise, please contact our resident travel agent, Penny LeGrand, as soon as possible. If she has



From left: Judi Hollis Kramer, Barry Barr-Finch, and Penny LeGrand, check out one of the suites at the Renaissance for the 2014 AWON National Conference.

an idea how many people might participate she can put together the best cruise package for us. You can contact Penny at pennylg@msn.com, or (520) 907-1404.

Of course, we also are developing programs and events for the conference, such as speakers, the AWON Memorial Service, banquet, social activities, and more. More information, and a registration form, will appear in the fall newsletter.

By the way, September 2 is the Monday after Labor Day. I can almost guarantee gorgeous weather in Seattle. If you have questions contact: Barry Barr-Finch, (206) 200-0864, barrfinch1@gmail.com; or Judi Hollis Kramer, (360) 373-0938, ladybug1941jk@gmail.com. We look forward to seeing you.



AWON FOUNDER

Ann Bennett Mix

AWON OFFICERS

President

Ed Peters

Vice President

Gerry Conway Morenski

Secretary

Judy Geis Hoffman

Treasurer

Jerry Pinkerton

AWON DIRECTORS

Norm Burkey

Norma Nicol Hamilton

Judy Hathaway

Kathy Le Comte

Bonnie Oates

AWON ADMINISTRATION

Database Manager Gerry Morenski

Dues Jerry Pinkerton

Bookstore Manager Walt Linne

The Star Editor Kathy Le Comte

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 2013 by the American WWII Orphans Network. All rights reserved.

Issue #69 1M (07-13)

AWON Attends White House Breakfast

On Memorial Day, AWON attended the Gold Star Families White House breakfast, and later accompanied President and Mrs. Barack Obama to Arlington National Cemetery for the annual wreath-laying ceremony.

This was the first time AWON received a direct invitation to the White House breakfast since 2001 when AWON Founder Ann Mix and future AWON President Emeritus Patricia Gaffney-Kindig attended the event hosted by President and Mrs. George W. Bush. AWON attended in 2012 at the invitation of Sons and Daughters in Touch (SDIT), the organization representing children who lost parents in service during the Vietnam War.

AWON was represented at the White House by Anne Moloney Black, Susan Johnson Hadler, Phyllis Epstein Louis, J. Lee Mathis,



At the White House, from left: Susan Hadler, Phyllis Louis, Betty Volkan, Lee Mathis and Anne Black.

and Betty Palonen Volkan. AWON Board President Ed Peters, Clattie Cunningham, and Louis, presented the AWON wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown at Arlington. Following are descrip-

tion, in their own words, of this year's momentous occasion:

***Susan Hadler:** The breakfast was beyond wonderful. I felt like an honored guest. Every detail was thoughtful and beautiful, including the seating. At our table there were two from AWON, Betty Volkan and myself, two hosts (ours was a Joint Chief of Staff and his wife), two who had lost fathers in the Vietnam War, and two parents who, sadly, had lost sons recently in Iraq. The arrangement allowed us to share our experiences, and I felt like an older sister having processed so much with the help of AWON. The woman whose father died*

AWON Board to Meet in St. Louis

The AWON Board of Directors will hold its in-person board meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, October 17-20, 2013.

Per the organization's by-laws, the board must meet in person once a year. The board fulfills this requirement in years when there is a national conference. In non-conference years the board selects a city to meet where the board can discuss long-term issues. All members are welcome to attend the meeting.

If you are interested in attending the St. Louis meeting, please contact a board director for hotel information (if needed) and other arrangements.

...continued on page 4

... White House, from page 3

in Vietnam had read my book, *Lost in the Victory*, and was amazed to find that it expressed her feelings exactly. The two who lost fathers in Vietnam were just like us, and we talked about our fathers and our experiences as war orphans. Betty shared her fantastic story of finding her father's canteen. The bond is deep and true no matter the war – we are sisters and brothers.

The food was delicious - biscuits with ham and pineapple, tiny biscuits with crab, half biscuits with salmon, a crustless quiche, berry parfaits, pancakes with blueberry syrup, and a tray with small croissants and pastries. After eating we lined up to greet President and Mrs. Obama in the Blue Room. I brought an inscribed copy of *Lost in the Victory* for the Obamas, which I handed to an aide who promised they would get it. I greeted the president in Swahili to connect with and remind him of his own absent father who was a Luo from Kenya. He smiled widely and asked where I'd been. I held his hand in both of mine while thanking him for honoring our fathers and us. Then I turned to Mrs. Obama and found her to be so warm and radiant that I hugged her. She commented on my sweater and said that she needed to get hers before the ceremony at Arlington; it was a chilly day. She was down to earth and in the moment.

It was all so personal and lovely. Then we went to the Army buses that took us to the ceremony at Arlington with an escort. Several of us were marched down the aisle to the front section while the band played. I was very moved to see quite a few kids wearing red TAPS t-shirts (Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors). And when the bugler played Taps, every note rang out over the amphitheater and beyond to reach our fathers.

It was amazing to be recognized and honored by our government in a personal way, and every AWONer and his or her father, grandfather, uncle, etc. was there with us.

Anne Black: After meeting the president, I was introduced to Michelle Obama, who was warm and lovely. As I stood there holding her hand, I was quite overwhelmed thinking of my dad dying in a field in Germany and all my mother had done, for us and for me, in the years that followed. I was quite shaken and must admit, I shed a few tears. They would have been so pleased that I was there in that big White House and that they were in my heart with me at that moment.

Betty Volkan: While we were waiting to go into the White House the other AWONers and I were remembering our mothers and our grandmothers and the siblings of our fathers. Sixty-nine years after my father's death he is still being honored by my being invited to the breakfast at the White House. I can just imagine my mother, aunt and grandmother marveling at the opportunity to remember my father in such a grand fashion. They would want to know all the details and they would be terribly pleased.



We saw lots of stars on lots of uniforms among the 80 or so guests. Gen. Martin Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was there, as was Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. At our table the host and host-

ess were the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. James Winnefeld, and his wife, Mary. It was kind of shocking when I realized I was old enough to be the mother of the admiral's wife. They talked how now people are surviving horrendous injuries in war and when they return to the U.S. they need long-term medical care, and the families need support in so many ways. Mary is active in an organization to support military families. When I mentioned that I belonged to the American WWII Orphans Network, the admiral asked about my mother. He seemed surprised that we were referred to as orphans even if we had mothers. I told him that is the term the government used, and then Susan Hadler mentioned Abraham Lincoln's use of the word orphan.

Susan and I were definitely the old folks at

the table. It was moving to see the Gold Star Mother at our table with a picture of her son on her jacket, just like many in AWON wear. That Gold Star Mother could have been my daughter. We felt a kinship with the children whose fathers died in Vietnam. One of them was recalling a father/son event at school, and the other SDIT member was aware of Susan's book and had referred to it in her master's thesis. Sacrifices are still being made and it was very obvious that day, especially at our table where there was a couple representing the DAV.

The highlight, of course, was meeting President and Mrs. Obama in a receiving line. As we came to the doorway of the receiving room someone first asked me if he was pronouncing Volkan correctly, and then another person asked if I wanted to be called Elizabeth to which I replied I prefer Betty. Next instant, someone in a clear voice announced 'Betty Volkan,' and I am shaking hands with the President. I told him this was the first time I had looked forward to Memorial Day and I thanked him. Someone was motioning for me to quickly move on and I was ready to shake hands with the First Lady when she opened her arms to embrace me. I repeated to her what I had told the President and she genuinely replied, "You will have to come again next year!" Looking back, I think she saw my Gold Star pin and my AWON pin and she knew I needed a hug.

At Arlington Cemetery I, for the first time, along with Phyllis Louis, Lee Mathis and Clatie Cunningham, placed the AWON wreath. That was quite moving. I had to remind myself to put one foot in front of another as I walked. In front of us were the Gold Star Wives and in front of them the TAPS children. I thought how we would have had very different life experiences growing up if TAPS had been around in the 1940s and 1950s. It was wonderful to see the children placing a wreath and then being con-

gratulated by their mothers for doing a "good job."

Although there were only five of us from AWON at breakfast that day, we knew there were so many additional spirits with us.

Lee Mathis: We gathered in the park just south of the Treasury Building before 8 a.m. At 8:00, the uniformed Secret Service folks came out to begin the check-in process. The first check point was about 50-60 yards from the visitors' entrance to the White House where they checked our photo IDs against their approved list. After this we walked to a second check point just outside the entrance where they repeated this process. Then we went inside where we were asked to stand on a set of large footprints on a mat for a few seconds. There was some sort of metal

device. Its purpose was unclear and they weren't telling. My guess is it scanned for traces of miscellaneous chemical compounds. After this, we walked a bit further and passed through a typical metal detector and x-ray machines we're all familiar with - just like at the airport. We then walked up the walkway along side the East Wing and entered the East Wing.

We were met at a desk where they asked our name and gave everyone

an envelope. In the envelope were two cards - one with our table assignment and another with our full name. Then, down the East Wing colonnade and up the stairs to the first floor entry lobby. There was a coffee/juice bar set up which was most welcome. Holding my coffee cup as I walked around looking for the others, I met the National President of the Gold Star Wives. As the other AWONers came in we milled around for a bit and then the staff announced the buffet was open.

While Susan and Betty were seated together at another table, Phyllis, Anne and I were at the



Betty Volkan, Lee Mathis and Clattie Cunningham at Arlington National Cemetery.

...continued on page 6

...White House, from page 5

same table. Our table-mate was the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr., and his wife.

After a while, the POTUS/FLOTUS just sort of appeared in the room and made their way to the Red Room for the receiving line. We were asked to leave our personal belongings, particularly cameras, at our table. Then we were reminded take our name cards and give them to the military aide in the receiving line.

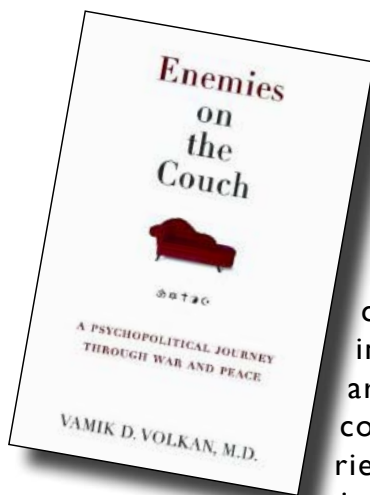
Shaking hands with the President and Mrs. Obama was one of those "I cannot believe this is actually happening" moments. Although I wanted to tell them both exactly why I was there, I knew that there would be no time for chit-chat, and we were asked not to linger in the line. Consequently, about all I could say to both of them was thanks for inviting us. However, upon meeting Mrs. Obama and saying thanks, I did ask "How are the girls?" She said, "They're great!"

The Army buses moved us to Arlington Cem-

etry very quickly with a police escort. Along the way, lots of folks on the sidewalks waved and smiled as we passed. They probably thought we were all U.S. Army. It was a true thrill to walk out with Phyllis, Betty and Clatie Cunningham while carrying the AWON wreath in honor of all our dads. There were hundreds of people standing on the steps facing the tomb and all around.

When we finally stopped in front of the U.S. Army Old Guard member in front of the Tomb, he very quietly said to me (without moving his lips), "Please turn the wreath around." He needed the front of the wreath facing away from him to place it at the Tomb. After that, we all walked away from the area and began to drift away.

We've lived here in the Washington, D.C. area for about 30 out of the last 33 years. Never did I ever seriously think I'd have an opportunity to shake hands with the President of the United States. Truly wish all of our AWONers could have been there.



AWON is pleased to announce the latest book by Nobel Peace Prize nominee and friend, Vamik D. Volkan, M.D. Vamik is widely considered to be the world's foremost expert on the psychology of war-torn societies. He is the husband of AWON orphan Betty Palonen Volkan and a past speaker at AWON conferences.

In *Enemies on the Couch*, Vamik describes his journey into political psychology. He writes about the people and events he came into contact with during his 35 years assisting in conflict resolution around the world. He discusses, in layman terms, the international conflicts and massive traumas that he observed, his pioneering theories on large-group psychology such as transgenerational transmissions and leader-follower relationships, and his role as an international

mediator.

"... Dr. Volkan provides a unique window onto watershed moments of the recent past... from the collapse of the Soviet Union... to the continued violence in the Middle East. The findings and observations presented in this volume provide not only a new way of looking at recent historical events, but also offer a novel set of tools for understanding and shaping the present and future."

Available at Amazon.com and Pitchstonepublishing.com

AWON Connections

Pictures and Stories of Members
Gathering Around the Country



Two Seattle members met for breakfast in May. Pat Henderson and Sue Isaacson have a lot in common: they both grew up in Nebraska just 50 miles apart, and they both patronize Seattle's Ballard pool, where they have greeted each other in passing for eight years. They plan to have more breakfasts and conversations in the future. *Pat*

John Harvard's bar in Harvard Square, but lately they've been meeting at the historic Warren Tavern in Charlestown, MA. *Bill*



Eleven members of the Southern California (So-Cal) Lunch Bunch met in May. They were saddened over the recent death of AWON sister, Eleanor Simmonds, who was a regular at their get-togethers. The group met at the Lone Star Steakhouse in Lake Elsinore, a little farther north than usual, in the hopes of attracting members who don't usually attend. It was a wise move as Patrick Byrne and Mary and Sergei (Sarge) Klimow joined the group. Barbara Swenson told everyone about being at Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and finding a young man standing by her father's grave. He was German and said that he just felt compelled to be in the cemetery that day. By coincidence he went to Barbara's father's grave. He was surprised and moved to learn that Barbara was the daughter of the man who lay under the cross. He had not fully realized that the soldiers buried there have families, people who love them, and travel across the sea to visit their final resting places. Dale Roybal rode with Sharon and Roger Connor for the 160-mile round trip from San Diego to Lake Elsinore. The ladies are genealogy buffs, so



Bill Chiodo, Gerry Morenski and Bill's daughter, Amy, met in April for their annual "Same Time Next Year Lunch" that they've held for 12 years. For the first few years they met at

...continued on page 8

...Connections, from page 7

Roger volunteered to drive while they sat in the back talking about their “brick walls” and research triumphs. Pictured, from left, are Dick Swenson, Patrick Byrne, Barbara Swenson, Sergei and Mary Klimow, Dale Roybal, Vic Muller, Sharon Connor, Linda Porter, Roger Connor and Bob Porter. *Roger*

fathers died on Leyte, the Philippines, within a few weeks of each other. *Barry*



Several members and family from Northern California and Washington met for dinner in Novato, California in April. Front row, from left, are: Richard and Norma Hamilton, Nadja Baczynski, and Barry Barr-Finch. Back row, from left, are: Bob and Pat Armstrong, John and Dianne Baczynski, and Tom Brewer. *Dianne and Pat*

Caroline Jackson, left, and Margaret Holderman, met for lunch and conversation in Dover, Delaware in May. *Caroline*



Barry Barr-Finch and Tom Brewer visited members in Arizona and California in May. On the left, they met with Penny LeGrand, right; her husband, Steve, left; and grandson, Scott, middle; at her home in Tucson to discuss hotels for the 2014 conference in Seattle. On the right, Barry had coffee with Sharon Talbot of Palm Springs. Both of their

AWONer Rosalie Francisco and her husband, David, hosted a Washington AWON gathering in March. The large group was perfect for 2014 AWON National Conference co-chairs Barry Barr-Finch and Judi Hollis Kramer to test ideas. Judi also brought the AWON quilt for members to sign. Members in attendance were, front row, kneeling, from left; Barry Barr-Finch, Penny LeGrand (visiting from Arizona), and Joan Ritchie; second row: Sherry Haxby of Oregon, Sue Issacson, Rosalyn Meacham, Joe Lippi and Ann Nichols. Back row: Dale Nichols, Steve and

Sharon Wilkins, Rosemary Foster, Richard Adams of Oregon, Rosalie Francisco, Jan Harwell, David Francisco, and Judi Kramer. Inset is Nancy Kragh, who had to catch a ferry before the group photo. Tom Brewer is the photographer. *Barry*



In February, AWON President Emeritus Patricia Gaffney-Kindig of Denver had lunch with Roger Connor in San Diego. They hadn't seen each other for several years, so there was much catching up to do. They visited the *Unconditional Surrender* statue at the Embarcadero and the Bob Hope Memorial, and drove across the iconic Coronado Bridge to tour Coronado Island. *Roger*

Keep AWON Up To Date

Send address and email updates to Database Manager Gerry Morenski at dutiem@comcast.net.

If you are on the AWON ListServ and your email has changed, notify Moderator Judy Hoffman at jghoffman@satx.rr.com or Moderator Judy Hathaway at judy0305@yahoo.com

THANK YOU!



Pictured in front row, from left: Donna Allen, Maggie Fenstermacher, Lynne Lecrone, Norm Burkey and Jean Paul. Back row: Joan Miller, Janice Buterbaugh, Jeanne Rhinehart, Ruthie Joyce, Ken Sills and Walt Unangst.

Fine Turnout at York Gathering

Wonderful weather and even better conversation and food were on hand at the annual AWON York, Pennsylvania Gathering on April 27. There were eleven orphans and five spouses in attendance.

“As usual, it was great to be around other orphans, and have a chance to have time to just remember and think about our fathers,” reports organizer Lynne Lecrone. “It was time to remember their ultimate sacrifice.”

Lecrone adds it was a pleasure to welcome six attendees as “first timers”: Joan and Bob Miller, Ruthie Joyce, Jean Paul, and Walt and Janice Unangst. Other folks in attendance were Norm and Mary Burkey, Ken and Dodie Sills, Donna and Dick Allen, Maggie Fenstermacher, Janice Buterbaugh, Jeanne Rhinehart, and Lynne Lecrone.

“It was a wonderful time for all the orphans to visit with other orphans and share our thoughts and feelings,” Lecrone concludes.

In Their Memory

A Final Goodbye to Cherished Members

Douglas G. Cromarty, 73, passed away April 11, 2013, in Manassas, Virginia. He was the son of Pfc. George D. and Teresa



Doug Cromarty

Josephine (Gillen) Cromarty. Douglas was a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and a retired police officer. Survivors include two children, three grandchildren, and his former wife. His family asked that memorial contributions be made to the AWON Margraten Fund.

Margie C. Vaughn, 69, of Pendleton, Indiana, passed away on May 8, 2013. She was born in Kentucky, the daughter of Tech.



Margie Vaughn

5 Thomas K. Flynn and Geneva Flynn. Her stepfather was Cecil R. Thompson. She is survived by her husband, two children, three grandchildren, a stepsister and two stepbrothers.

Eleanor Simmonds of San Diego passed away April 14, 2013. She frequently attended the AWON So-Cal gatherings. She is survived by her

daughter, Christine Hiatt.

William 'Bill' Magruder Maury died April 12, 2013 in Bethesda, Maryland. He was the son of Maj. Thompson B. Maury III and Priscilla Maury. His father died aboard the *Oryoku Maru* Japanese hellship. Bill attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. He is survived by his wife, Trammell; a daughter and son; three step-children; three grandchildren, two sisters and a brother.

Constance 'Connie' Castellanos Caldwell, 72, died March 18, 2013, in Bethesda, Maryland. She was a former substitute schoolteacher and a former chief judge of the Montgomery County Board of Elections. She was the daughter of Pvt. Bartolome and Margaret Castellanos. She is survived by her husband, a brother and a sister.

Sgt. Maj. Robert D. Tikkanen passed away No-

vember 24, 2011, in Joplin, Missouri, from a rare form of cancer as a result of Agent Orange in Vietnam. He was 68. He served 27



R. Tikkanen

years in the U.S. Army and coordinated the 2002 AWON National Conference in Branson, Missouri. He was the son of Pfc. Henry J. and Rena St. Pierre Tikkanen. He is survived by his wife, three children, six grandchildren, and a brother.

John F. Wasmer, the adoptive father of AWONer Bob Wasmer, died May 3, 2013, at the age of 93. He adopted Bob and his brother, Jerry, after marrying their mother in 1947. He was a World War II veteran, serving in Alaska with the U.S. Army Signal Corps. In addition to his sons he is survived by his wife.

AWONers Featured in NPR Memorial Day Story

A reporter from radio station WBUR Boston interviewed members Gerry Conway Morenski, Bill McLean and Walter Carter for a Memorial Day feature about World War II orphans.

The story aired on the local station as well as NPR's *Weekend Edition Sunday* program on May 26.

You can listen to the story and see photos at <http://www.npr.org/2013/05/26/186639149/orphaned-by-world-war-ii-children-salute-fallen-fathers>

...Muller, from front page

but was rejected because he was too old. I went down the next day and tried to enlist also, but I was only nine years old. Never did I realize that one day I indeed would end up fighting - for my brother's legacy.

In 2000 I was on the Internet looking for some military design manuals when I came across the American Battle Monuments Commission website, listing the dates for all the Memorial Day services. My daughter, Heidi, and I decided to go to the Luxembourg American Cemetery where my brother is buried. I first visited the cemetery in 1954 while stationed in Germany as part of the last occupation forces. The cemetery was still under construction, and the only permanent features were the gravesites with their marble head-

stones.

Gen.

George S.

Patton was

the only

one who

still had

a wood

cross.

During

my second

visit we

received a package of information, including the name and address of the 80th Infantry Division Veterans' Association. This was the information that I was looking for.

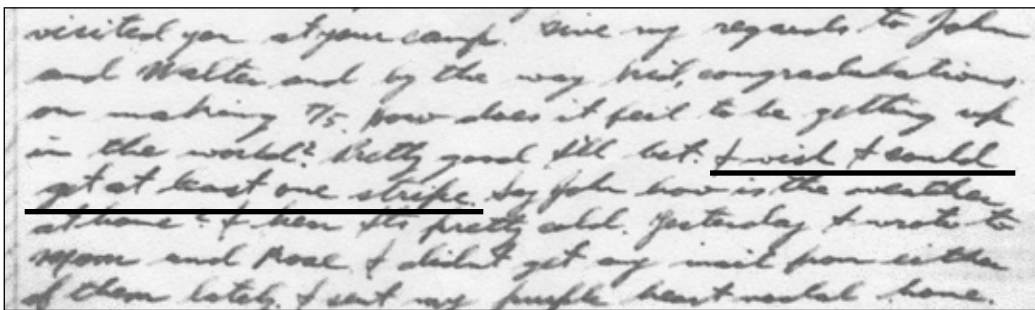
After the services we were invited to a community center where we were given dinner and all we wanted to drink as the guests of the U.S. Veterans Friends-Luxembourg. All of the people were very friendly and treated us royally. They gave us some maps and directions to get to the small village of Biersdorf, Germany, where my brother was KIA on February 26, 1945. It is about 25 kilometers from the Luxembourg border.

The following day, my daughter and I drove to the village and stopped. We did not know where my brother had been. It could have been north, south, east, or west.

We took some panoramic pictures and then continued on our journey to Amsterdam.

When I got home from Amsterdam I contacted the 80th Division Veterans' Association and was invited to their annual reunion in Louisville, Kentucky. One evening, several vets asked what I knew about my brother's awards. I told them that all our family knew was that he had received a Purple Heart. Well, that stirred up a hornet's nest, and I thought World War III was going to start.

They told me that my brother was entitled to several medals and badges, and that since he had been wounded previously, he was also entitled to an Oak Leaf Cluster on his Purple Heart. In addition, since he was a Private, he was supposed to have been promoted to Private First Class automatically. #^*&%+&@ was all I heard thereafter. It



The 1945 letter in which Pvt. Muller hoped for a promotion: "I wish I could get at least one stripe." (underlined).

seems that for this one rank all the infantry divisions had a policy to promote them when they were wounded. The vets then pret-

ty much commanded me to get all of my brother's awards and promotion.

I mentioned this experience to my two older sisters and, to my surprise, they produced 70 letters from my brother. Six of them were addressed to me - and I remembered them. In one letter he said he was very happy that I wrote to him and told him everything about the family. He said he did not want to upset me but I needed to practice my spelling. In the very last one - dated Feb. 24, 1945 - he wrote home from Germany, congratulating my brother-in-law for being promoted to T5, and wished he could receive at least one stripe. Well, that clinched it. I decided to pursue obtaining all of his awards and to

...continued on page 12

...Muller, from page 11

get him promoted.

The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis promptly said they had no records of him due to the 1973 fire. I had to "build" a record with a variety of documents that I researched, including all of his company daily morning reports, after-action reports, and World War II maps that the late AWONer Jack Forgy found for me at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. I sent all of this to NPRC and they approved my request, except for two items. The first was his Ex-

pert Rifle Badge. The second was his promotion to PFC. They provided me with a bunch of forms to submit to the Army Board for Correction of Military Records. For his Expert Rifle Badge I enclosed a copy of one of his letters from 1944 in which he writes to



The memorial Vic Muller built on the hilltop where his brother was killed.

our mother that he just qualified as an expert with the rifle - getting a score of 180 points on the range. For his promotion I enclosed a copy of the 1945 in which he expressed his desire to receive at least one stripe.

The board approved both requests. For his promotion they made it effective February 25, 1945 - one day before he was KIA on February 26, 1945. It

should have been September 24, 1944, when he was first wounded in France, but that's OK. I was happy that he was promoted. The Army said for the one day with his new rank he was entitled to an increase in pay of 85 cents, but did not send out checks for less than a dollar; and no, they did not pay interest from 1945 to 2002. As a result of his promotion, I asked the ABMC to correct his records and replace his headstone with his new rank of PFC, which they did.

In 2001, my son, Michael, and I went back to Europe. This time, because we had all of the company morning reports, we were able to trace my brother's movements,

**PLEASE HELP OUR DATABASE MANAGER!
Her eyes are getting old (like yours)!**

I am having trouble reading email addresses printed on renewal forms. PLEASE write clearly. If I can't read your handwriting you will not receive the latest AWON news, including notification of the latest e-STAR. If you normally send a check without a renewal form, please print your email on the check, or attach a note with the email address.

And, please print it clearly.

Also, please include your email address every time you renew; you may have forgotten if you changed your email address months ago.



Thank You,
Gerry Conway Morenski
AWON Database Manager
dutiem@comcast.net

Welcome New Members

Gayla Bryant Olson, AZ, daughter of ILT Virgil V. Bryant, Army
Elizabeth Ekeberg, CA, niece of PVT Charles R. White, Army
Thom Kettle, IL, son of PVT John Kettle Jr., Army
Rebecca Becker, MN, niece of PVT Charles R. White, Army
Lois LaPointe Kiely, NJ, dau of PFC Louis J. LaPointe, Army
Jon G. Shanfelder, PA, son of PFC Guy J. Shanfelder, Army
Melva Cranfill Thompson, TX, dau of PVT M.D. Cranfill, Army
Amanda Winters, WA, great-granddaughter of RM2 Vernon L. Failer, Navy
John Putman, CA, nephew of LT John F. Putman, Army Air Force
Naomi Rauff, MA, dau of 2LT George F. Heafy, Army

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

starting in France and going to every village all the way up into Germany where he was KIA. Forgy found maps that showed how my brother's company attacked a hilltop on the northeast side of Biersdorf. The Division chaplain wrote a letter to my mother stating that the Germans fired 40 rounds of artillery onto the hilltop that killed my brother. I received permission from the farmer who owns the property to build a memorial for my brother.

In 2004, I started by planting a tree on the hilltop. The following year I had a pedestal built with a bronze plaque on it. The next year I had a concrete plaza built and added some flowers. I tried to keep the monument simple but with all my friends over there it started growing. I now go almost every year and plant new flowers and spend some time there. I visit my brother in the cemetery where he is buried, and the mountain top where he was KIA. I have made several friends in Luxembourg

and they love Americans.

It turns out that my brother is entitled to two badges and six medals - the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Expert Rifle Badge, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart with an Oak Leaf Cluster, the Good Conduct Medal, the American Campaign Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two bronze campaign stars, and the World War II Victory Medal. I requested a formal presentation of his awards and in 2001, Brig. Gen. Robert B. Ostenberg presented all of my brother's awards to my two sisters and me. My sisters were very happy that I had pursued our brother's awards.



The memorial marker

It was a very special day for our family. I strongly urge anyone who does not know what awards their loved one is entitled to pursue them. I have helped about 15 families and they are all happy they did it. If anyone needs any help I will gladly help out the best I can: vsmuller@cox.net.

Second Year AWON Invited to Memorial Day Event

Orphan Speaks at WWII Museum

AWON was privileged to have one of its own speak at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans on Memorial Day.

The Hon. Bonnie Crane Hellums, a family court judge of Harris County (Houston), Texas, spoke about her personal story of being the daughter and mother of a serviceman.

Her father, 1st Lt. Newton S. 'Pete' Blackford, was a B-17 pilot. He crashed on take-off from Algiers on July 16, 1943. Her son is Capt. Dr. Josh Hellums, who has served in Iraq.

Hellums spoke eloquently about never knowing her father.

"I think the point that struck home was when I tried to describe the heart pain from

Johnson Interview on Museum Website

In 2011, AWONer Wayne Johnson spoke at the National WWII Museum for Memorial Day about his father, a B-17 pilot. Museum staff interviewed Johnson afterwards. The interview is posted on the museum's website at <http://mymemorialday.org/remember>. Scroll down to 1st Lt. Gerald W. Johnston.

to keep my voice from crying... then sharing the toxic mixture of fear and pride over having my only son fighting for our country."

As many AWONers know who have attended AWON National Conferences or who have just spent time with her, Hellums is an excellent speaker. She spoke off the cuff, only relying on her thoughts, her feelings, and

a few talking points helpfully given to her by AWONer Sam Tannenbaum, who was instrumental in getting Hellums the spotlight.

"I kept in contact with Terri Burton (Associate Vice President of Membership and New Media) until Terri asked me for an AWON speaker for their Memorial Day program," Tannenbaum says.

At the end of her program seven World War II orphans came down and, according to Hellums, "We all cried together.

"I told them that they were not alone any longer as they now had each other, and I encouraged them to stay in touch with each other. They all said they had never met another orphan before."



Bonnie Hellums speaking at the National WWII Museum.

AWON Supports WWII Museum

AWON is an official supporter of the National WWII Museum, raising more than \$12,000 for the museum's "Road to Victory Brick Campaign." To purchase a brick using AWON's special code (GG001), contact:

Chickie Shields Berry
P.O. Box 1136
Spirit Lake, ID 83869
208-819-9863
chkebry@msn.com

Museum memberships also will be credited to AWON with the GG001 code.

Memorial Day 2013 Stateside



1. The AWON wreath was presented at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in New York City by Millie McConnell Cavanaugh and Penny Bernstein. Pictured, from left, are Renee Cooley, Maggie Malone, Karen Hammerlof, Millie Cavanaugh, Penny Bernstein and Augie Palegi.



2. Sisters Nancy Heath Lawson and Helen Heath Vernon rode on a float for Gold Star family members and AWON in the Marion, Virginia, Memorial Day parade.



3. Barbara Torrey Smith, Martha Spiers Lepore, Rita Niro Blair and Sharon Crowley Connor attended the 113th Memorial Day ceremonies at Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery. Barbara provided the patriotic floral offering on behalf of AWON. From left are Blair, Connor and Smith. Lepore is the photographer.

4. Alix Bonneyman Prejean and Vanita Rae Smith, presented the AWON wreath at the National Memorial of the Pacific in Honolulu, aka "Punchbowl."

5. Rondy Elliott spoke at the Heritage Pines Community in Cary, North Carolina, where she met World War II orphan, Col. Travis Thompson, Air Force (ret.). S/Sgt. Albert T. Thompson Jr.'s plane went down over the English Channel in 1943. Rondy told him about AWON and encouraged him to join.

6. Norma Nicol Hamilton participated in the annual Reading of Names at the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Sacramento, California. Photo rights reserved to rosequeen49@pacbell.net.





Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial, Netherlands

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Gerry Morenski • Presenter – AWONer Angela Christian. Also present were Angela's husband, Roy, and AWON Dutch Friend, Joost Claassens.



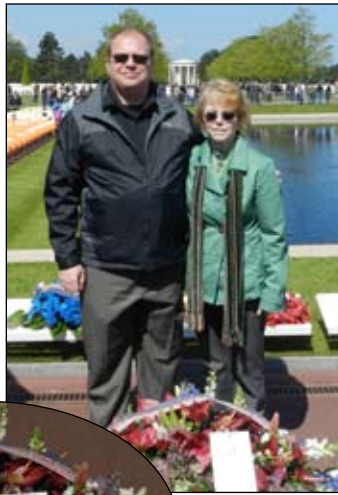
Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial, Luxembourg

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Denise Thill, U.S. Army. AWON Overseas Coordinator – Denise Thill, Luxembourg.

Memorial

This year marked the 10th annual AWON Memorial Day Wreath Ceremony at American military cemeteries overseas. Each wreath was presented at that cemetery. The Memorial Day Wreath Ceremony was presented in honor, with design assistance from Webmaster and assistance from AWON's Overseas Friends.

AWON website at <http://www.>



Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Sharon Crowley Connor • AWON Overseas Coordinator – AWON Normandy Ambassador Jean-Marc Lesueur • Presenters – Left photo: Jean-Marc Lesueur and AWONer Charlene Czajowski. Also present was Charlene's son, Pete (right photo).



Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Brian Hope • Presenters – Staff. Present were AWON Overseas Friends Jean-Marc Lesueur and Jack Emery.



**Arg American
and Memorial,
mbourg**

inator – Donna O'Brien •
inator – Denise Thill • Pre-
S. Veterans Friends, Lux-



**Rhone American Cemetery
and Memorial, France**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Vic Muller •
Presenter - Superintendent Bruce Malone

Day 2013

Memorial Day Wreath Presentation at 15 Ameri-
ath bore the names of AWON fathers buried
Project is chaired by Sharon Crowley Con-
er Rik Peirson, and overseas coordination
More color photos and information is on the
awon.org/new/memorials.html



**Sicily-Rome American
Cemetery and Memorial, Italy**
AWON Stateside Coordinator –
Bob Meek • Presenter – Superin-
tendent Christine Young



**Henri-Chapelle American Cem-
etry and Memorial, Belgium**
AWON Stateside Coordinator – Rik
Peirson • AWON Overseas Coordi-
nators – AWON Belgian Ambassa-
dors and project founders Regine
and Bernard Achten • Presenters
– AWON Family Members Rebecca
Becker and Liz Ekeberg (first and
third from left). Also present were
Regine and Bernard Achten (second
and fourth from left), and daughter,
Marie.



**North Africa American Cemetery
and Memorial, Tunisia**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Diane Marnette Sagen • Overseas Coordinator – Staff • Presenter – Maj. Fred Nasredine, Affairs and Army Programs Officer, U.S. Embassy, Tunisia



**Cambridge American Cemetery
and Memorial, England**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Jean Rhinehart • Overseas Coordinator – Jane Thompson • Presenters – Staff

Memorial



Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Dave Colinan • Presenters – Left photo, from left: AWON Epinal Ambassador and Retired Cemetery Superintendent Roland Prieur; Prieur's grandson, Nicolas Liegey; and AWON Overseas Friend and Animator of the Association of l'Espace de Memoire Lorraine 1939-45, Jerome Leclerc. Also present were, right photo, from left: Isabelle Mangin, Resistant and Gen. George S. Patton's interpreter; Marie and Roland Prieur, and Maurice Baier, Resistant.



**Lorraine American Cemetery
and Memorial, France**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Paul Bremer • Presenter – Staff



**Florence American Cemetery
and Memorial, Italy**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Bill Chiodo • Presenter – Superintendent John Luncheon



**Ardennes American Cemetery
and Memorial, Belgium**

AWON Stateside Coordinator - Gail Eisenhower • AWON Overseas Coordinator – Ariane Villers • Presenter – Ariane Villers. Also present, Ariane's daughter, Lise Villers



**Suresnes American Cemetery
and Memorial, France**

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Sharon Crowley Connor • Overseas Coordinator - ABMC • Suresnes is a WWI cemetery with 24 WWII unknowns. Their children also are unknown, so AWON honors their fathers for them.

Day 2013



Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Philippines

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Patty Temte • AWON Overseas Coordinator – Asst. Cemetery Superintendent Bert Caloud • Presenters - Mr. and Mrs. Vicente Lim III, pictured right, grandson of Brig. Gen. Vicente Lim, on the Tablets of the Missing. Also present were, from left, Brig. General Lim's granddaughter, Ching Yap; and Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim (no relation).

Widow Knows What Makes A Hero

It's never too late to tell a hero's tale. It took Virginia Hallman 12 years to sort through memories and to research the life story of her husband, Medal of Honor recipient S/Sgt. Sherwood H. Hallman. *More Than a War Hero* was published in 2010 when Virginia was 87. Perhaps, then, this story actually has two heroes.

Virginia and Sherwood grew up together in a small Pennsylvania town. They had one son together, AWON member Sherwood Hallman II. Virginia eventually remarried, having five more children. It wasn't until adulthood, then, that young Sherwood searched for people who could tell him about his father. Eventually, he found veterans of his father's unit and then the people of Brittany and Normandy, France, who made him recognize just how much a hero his father was. On the 50th anniversary of D-Day, Virginia and her son were dignitaries during ceremonies in France. It was after these events that Virginia started to write.

"She had never dreamed of writing a book until she was inspired by another Medal of Honor recipient, who insisted she make the attempt," explains Sherwood. "Unfortunately, she was unable to locate him after completing the project to acknowledge his role."

More Than a War Hero describes the events that brought S/Sgt. Hallman and his wife together, and how their lives changed through rapidly developing circumstances.

S/Sgt. Hallman enlisted in January 1943 and was assigned to Co. F, 175th Inf. Regt. of the 29th Inf. Div., which was sent to England for invasion training. The 175th landed on the still-unsecured Omaha Beach on the morning

of June 7, 1944, and proceeded to seize the village of Isigny and then on to St. Lo. The 175th fought honorably in Normandy until the end of August when the Division was moved to Brittany to participate in the capture of Brest and the German submarine pens located there.

According to Hallman's Medal of Honor Citation, on September 13, 1944, the Second Battalion was in Brittany, attacking the fortified city of Brest. The enemy held off the attacks for three days. Co. F eventually advanced within several hundred yards of the enemy position but was halted by intense fire.

S/Sgt. Hallman ordered his squad to cover him while he advanced alone to make an assault. He left



Young Sherwood and Virginia accepting S/Sgt. Hallman's Medal of Honor.

over a hedgerow into a sunken road where the Germans had a machinegun position and at least 30 riflemen. Unassisted, S/Sgt. Hallman killed or wounded four of the enemy and ordered the remainder to surrender. Twelve surrendered, and upon seeing the position surrendered, about 75 more of the enemy in the vicinity surrendered.

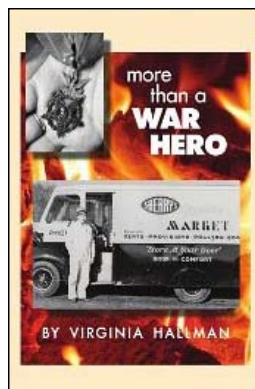
This single heroic act resulted in the immediate advance of the entire battalion of 2,000 yards to a position from which Fort Keranroux was captured later that day.

S/Sgt. Hallman was killed in action the next day. On April 17, 1945, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. He is buried at Brittany American Cemetery. He was 30 years old.

Sherwood has his father's Medal of Honor. Virginia passed away in October 2012 at the age of 89. Her book is available at Amazon.com.



S/Sgt. Hallman





AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



BOOKS

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

<p>___ NEW! <i>The Lost Submarine: A True Story of Love and War</i> by Nancy Kenney \$16.00</p>	<p>___ <i>In Their Memory: American WWII Orphans Network</i> by Turner Publishing Company Standard Book was \$49.95 REDUCED! \$10.00 Leatherbound Book was \$79.95 REDUCED! \$25.00</p>
<p>___ NEW! <i>"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the Lives of America's Children</i> by William M. Tuttle Jr., PhD \$30.00</p>	<p>___ <i>The Fighting Tigers: The Untold Story Behind the Names on the Quachita Baptist University WWII Memorial</i> by William Downes \$24.95</p>
<p>___ <i>In My Father's Words: Letters From A World War II Soldier</i> by Bill McElvain \$16.00</p>	<p>___ <i>The War Journey of Major Damon "Rocky" Gause</i> by Maj. Damon "Rocky" Gause, foreward by Damon L. Gause \$21.95</p>
<p>___ <i>If These Stones Could Talk</i> REDUCED! by Col. Calvin G. "Jerry" Lyons, USA (Ret) \$20.00</p>	<p>___ <i>Soldier's Son</i> by Ben McClelland \$28.00</p>
<p>___ <i>The Dad I Never Knew: A War Orphan's Search for Inner Healing</i> by Bruce Brodowski REDUCED! \$7.95</p>	<p>___ <i>No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love: A Son's Journey to Normandy</i> by Walter Ford Carter REDUCED! \$18.00</p>
<p>___ <i>Farebersville 1944</i> by Jeff Wignall \$18.95</p>	<p>___ <i>D-Day + 60 Years: A Small Piece of Airborne History</i> by Jerome J. McLaughlin \$25.00</p>
<p>___ <i>A Soldier's Daughter</i> by Lois Brown Klein \$17.00</p>	<p>___ <i>They Also Served: Women's Stories from the World War II Era</i> by Jeanie Sutton Lambright hardcover \$35.00 softcover \$24.00</p>
<p>___ <i>The Ordinary Infantrymen: Heroes Then, Heroes Again</i> by Imogene Woods and Twelve WWII Infantrymen \$15.00</p>	<p>___ <i>Finding Billy</i> by Diana Thompson Dale, niece \$16.95</p>
<p>___ <i>Full Fathom Five: A Daughter's Search</i> by Mary Lee Coe Fowler \$29.95</p>	<p>___ <i>Father Found: Life and Death as a Prisoner of the Japanese in World War II</i> by Duane Heisinger \$13.95</p>
<p>___ <i>Love Always, Ben</i> by Huey Tyra, nephew REDUCED! \$2.00</p>	<p>___ <i>An 8th Air Force Combat Diary</i> by John A. Clark \$49.95</p>
<p>___ <i>When Your Number's Up: Meritocracy Goes to War</i> by Raymond S. Ross, PhD. \$10.00</p>	<p>___ <i>When I See a "Forty and Eight" ... I Remember World War Two</i> by Jacques Adnet, Lt. Col. USAF (ret.) \$12.00</p>
<p>___ <i>Sporty Course (bomber pilots)</i> by Col. Jack Swayze \$10.00</p>	<p>___ <i>For Those Who Love, Time Is Not</i> by Kay Brigham REDUCED! \$16.00</p>
<p>___ <i>The Hotton Report (about The Battle for Hotton)</i> by Robert McDonald \$13.95</p>	<p>___ <i>Lost in the Victory: Reflections of America's Orphans of WWII</i> by Susan Johnson Hadler and Ann Bennett Mix \$32.50</p>
<p>___ <i>World War II: A Legacy of Letters - One Soldier's Journey</i> by Clinton Frederick \$26.95</p>	<p>___ <i>After the Liberators: A Father's Last Mission, A Son's Lifelong Journey</i> by William C. McGuire II \$16.95</p>
<p>___ <i>An 8th Air Force Combat Diary</i> by John A. Clark \$49.95</p>	<p>___ <i>Shobun: A Forgotten War Crime in the Pacific</i> by Michael J. Goodwin \$19.95</p>
<p>___ <i>When I See a "Forty and Eight" ... I Remember World War Two</i> by Jacques Adnet, Lt. Col. USAF (ret.) \$12.00</p>	



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



CD / VIDEO

NEW! *Leather and Strings*
by Mark LaPointe, grandson of Sgt William G. Aubut
featuring *Somewhere in Germany*, written and sung by Mark
at AWON's 10th conference memorial service \$6.00

___ *Letters of Love and War* (CD for Mac or PC)
by 1LT John and Betty Peirson \$19.44

___ *AWON 2004 Conference & WWII Memorial Dedication*
\$ 5.00*

___ *We Speak Their Names: A Tribute to Our Fathers*
produced by Patrick Tierney and **Terry Boettcher**
was \$15.00 \$ 5.00*

___ *AWON 2000 Conference: Journeys - Finding Our Fathers*
by Justin Taylan was \$15.00 \$ 5.00*

___ *Sleep My Sons: The Story of the Arisan Maru*
by **Shawnee Brittan** \$30.00

AWON Logo Products

___ Sweatshirt \$45.00
(circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X)

___ Windbreaker (blue) \$40.00
(circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X)

___ Denim shirt ___ short sleeve ___ long sleeve \$40.00
(circle size: S M L XL 2X)

___ Golf shirt ___ white ___ blue \$35.00
(circle size: S M L XL 2X)

___ **NEW! 20th Anniversary Logo T-shirt (navy)** \$20.00
(circle size: S M L XL 2X 3X)

___ Hat \$15.00

___ Scarf (royal blue fleece) \$15.00

___ **NEW! AWON 20th Anniversary Totebag** *\$10.00
* small, P&H included

___ Tote bag (large) \$20.00

___ **NEW! 20th Anniversary Garden Flags** \$15.00
without holder

AWON Gold Star crystal pendant (no chain included):

___ Gold Star crystal pendant 1 1/8" (28mm) \$10.00

___ Gold Star crystal pendant 1 1/2" (40mm) \$20.00

___ *AWON lapel pin \$10.00

___ Gold Star earrings \$20.00

___ *AWON button (2 1/4 inch) \$3.00

___ *AWON lanyard and name tag/ticket holder
(4" x 6") blue with white lettering \$6.00

___ *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: \$8 for each item. Items marked with an asterisk (*) include P&H. For multiple purchases:
Up to \$40: \$10 P&H \$40-\$60: \$12 P&H Over \$60: \$15 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

Members Share Memories of Father's Final Rest

ListServ Lights Up Over Burials

Editor's note: This is the continuation of the AWON ListServ discussion that started in the March issue about fathers' burials. More than 30 members in January and February shared their memories or knowledge of where their fathers are buried, the details that went into the decision, and their father's final burial service. The stories of those who gave permission for publication are here. This feature will continue in the October issue.

My dad was assigned to Battery B, 244th Field Artillery Battalion, U.S. Third Army. He died on March 10, 1945, in Germany, and was initially buried in Hamm American Cemetery in Luxembourg. My mom received the telegram in April 1945 - just a few weeks before VE Day. I was about 2.5 years old.

In August 1947, Mom received a letter from the Army informing her of the repatriation program, and asking if she would prefer to have her husband's remains returned to the States and reburied, or left in the American Cemetery. However, by that time she had remarried and was about five months pregnant with my little brother. She replied to the Army that, since she had remarried, it would not be appropriate for her to make such a decision.

She suggested that the Army contact my dad's mother who was then living in southwestern Georgia and provided her contact information. When my grandmother received her letter in March 1948, she responded that she wanted him returned and buried in his extended family's large plot in a small church cemetery in Cairo, Georgia. Almost a year later, in February 1949, after receiving no further information from the Army, my grandmother inquired about the status of his return and received a response just a few days later.

Later that year, in April 1949 when I was about 6.5 years old, my mom, my grand-

mother, my new six-week-old baby sister, and I, traveled to Cairo for my dad's funeral. We stayed with my dad's uncle who had signed for the casket when it had arrived on the train. When we arrived at his home, the flag-covered casket was in his living room - and so were a lot of people I didn't know.

I don't remember very much about the funeral the next day. My memories of the ceremony and burial are more like a series of snapshots. Nevertheless, I do remember walking into the very small country church almost filled with my dad's extended family members and friends. We walked to the front and sat next to my dad's only brother and his wife. I do not recall anything about the service, but I do remember being in tears at some point even though I had no memory of the man being eulogized.

Later, during the graveside ceremony in the adjacent cemetery, I definitely recall the flag being removed from atop the casket and presented to my mom. I still have it. And, finally, I most assuredly remember the honor guard firing their rifles and hearing the click-click-click sound of the gears in the small devices that lowered the casket into the ground.

Shortly after the graveside ceremony, I noticed two men speaking with my mom. They were two local veterans who had been in my dad's unit. One of them was with him when he died. Mom told me later that this one had told her that if she or I ever needed anything to please call on him and he would help.

A few days later we traveled back to north Alabama and about 15-16 years later, after finishing college and being commissioned in the USAF, my first assignment as a brand new lieutenant was to MacDill AFB in Tampa. After several months, I took a bit of leave and drove home. During my return to Florida, I decided to drive through Cairo.

...continued on page 24

... *Burials, from page 23*

Although this was the first time since I was 6.5 yrs old that I had visited my dad's grave, somehow I managed to drive almost directly to the cemetery. How I found it, I'll never know.

Eventually I was assigned to a NATO organization at Ramstein AB, Germany. After a year or so, I had an occasion to travel to SHAPE Headquarters in Brussels. At that time the driving route passed through Luxembourg City and right by the American Cemetery. On my way home, I stopped for a visit. I even inquired if they had records of any service personnel who had initially been buried there and then returned to the States. Unfortunately, no. However, if you have never been there, it has the most beautiful green grass with about 5,500 crosses and Stars of David aligned in perfectly straight rows.

As a result of seeing how nice and well maintained this cemetery was, I came to wish that my grandmother had not decided to have my dad returned. I even mentioned this to my mom later. Moreover, I maintained this opinion for quite a few years.

However, many years later I joined AWON after meeting AWON Founder Ann Mix at Arlington National Cemetery all those years ago like so many of you. As a result of meeting AWONers and hearing and reading their stories, particularly those of you who never had the opportunity to attend a funeral service for your dad, I came to realize just how meaningful my attending his funeral had been for me - even though I was only 6.5 at the time. So, even though he is buried in a small church cemetery in a small town in Georgia and not in a beautiful U.S. military cemetery, I am most grateful that my grandmother decided to have him returned home.

I haven't been able to visit the cemetery in Cairo very often. I was last there a little over six years ago. One visit, though, about 15 or so years ago, was probably the most meaningful. I was accompanied by my dad's older brother and only sibling, and his wife.

We walked to the Mathis plot where not only my paternal grandfather but also my uncle's grandfather are buried, along with a lot of aunts, uncles, and cousins. We stood at the grave for a while and then I walked away, but my uncle remained. It was a bit difficult for me as I turned back toward the gravesite. My uncle was still standing there looking down at his younger brother's grave. My uncle was only about 15 months old when his father died in December 1918 during the flu epidemic at the age of 26. My dad was born the following May. So, like me, they never knew their dad either.

J. Lee Mathis
Son of Cpl. Jasper A. Mathis
KIA 10 March 1945
Germany



I can hardly believe just how different my experience is with my dad's burial.

My dad was buried in a temporary cemetery, I think by the Germans. He was killed on Mt. Vaso, Italy. The description of the battle he was in is breathtaking.

One of the few survivors wrote me that my dad could not have been killed on the official date listed. The date had to be wrong because the very few survivors were in the hospital on that date. Research by our very own (the late) Jack Forgy said that the unit had run out of food, water, and ammunition - and it was around the Fourth of July. Almost the whole unit was annihilated. It was not until three weeks later that the Allies took back that hill. I know that it is difficult to understand that his actual date of death is unknown, but we are looking at these battles through eyes from the 21st Century, and in 1944 there were no computers and other reporting devices that we take for granted these days.

My mother was a 23-year-old widow with a 16-month-old toddler, and pregnant with my brother who was born six months later. The

U.S. Government sent her the MIA telegram then left our little family with no income or resources for nine months. It got so desperate that my mother used to tell me that we got down to 22 cents in the bank. In fact, she had to drive herself 17 miles to the hospital to give birth to my brother. It was several months later that she finally got the KIA telegram which, not surprisingly, she just didn't believe. My mother waited for my dad to come home the rest of her life.

Now, with that background, it may be easier to understand what happened next. We lived in a little town on the Washington side of the Columbia River. The rumors around town said that most of our "boys" had gotten so badly injured that many lost their minds and were wondering around Europe lost and looking for home! Another more cruel rumor was that the "boys" saw the beautiful women of Europe and decided to stay there, abandoning their family. My mother was in such deep distress and going through mourning without definitive information about the whereabouts of her husband that she sunk deep into the anger stage of mourning and really never got past that. When she was contacted in 1948 by the War Department that my dad's body could be brought back to the U.S., at first she didn't believe that it was his body. Second, she said, "Well, he died for Italy, he can just stay there!" So he was buried at Florence American Cemetery. About two years before she died she did go to Italy to see his white marble cross at the cemetery, but I don't believe that she accepted that my dad was in that grave. Wow, is my story different or what?

Kathey Ames

Daughter of Frank J. Piller

(I never list his rank, because my mother told me that he was advanced to sergeant on the battlefield)

KIA 7 or 8 July (listed as 9 July), 1944
on Mt. Vaso, Italy

My father was killed as a result of his plane being hit by flak in Germany. After I acquired my father's Individual Deceased Personnel File (IDPF) I learned he was buried and reburied in a civilian cemetery in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, along with his crewmates and other Allied soldiers. Four living crew members were taken to a POW camp; two of the four went to the hospital first. Today, there is one crew member still living.

The activity of removing and transferring the bodies of the U.S. soldiers during the late 1940s produced several investigative reports of which I have copies in the IDPF. My father and one of his crew members were not positively identified due to loss of the identifiers needed (fingers, toes, teeth). My father was transferred to Neuville-En-Condroz in Belgium as an unknown. I believe this place is now part of the Ardennes.

After my grandparents requested that my father's body be sent back to the United States, a forensics investigation was conducted. Somehow, they were able to re-identify his body, although they cautioned in the report that it might not be his body. This body is described as having a femur fracture and that the fontanelles of the skull had never closed properly. My aunt does not remember that my father ever had a broken leg, but she might not have known, being younger than he was.

Meanwhile, my father was brought to Woodlawn National Cemetery, Elmira, New York, during the early 1950s. Since my mother had remarried, she was out of the picture on what was going on. My stepfather had legally adopted me. No one took me to the funeral and burial. I am guessing that I wasn't taken there because my father's body was returned during mid-winter. Also, my family might have thought that it would be too upsetting for me, at that time, when I was about seven years old. However, even his parents and siblings did not attend.

The first time I visited my father's grave was when I took my grandmother, his moth-

...continued on page 26



... *Burials, from page 25*

er, to that cemetery. I had just left the convent and had acquired my freedom to do this. I was 26 years old. The first thing my grandmother said to me was, "Do you really think that he is really buried here?" That is my thought exactly, throughout all of these years. To complicate the issue, parts of my father's body were left behind in that cemetery in Germany. I have visited his grave a few times; once with my daughter when she was 14 and I was 44.

I have often wondered if I should pursue my father's identity in this grave or even have a funeral. All of that might be too upsetting; too expensive; and maybe, not necessary. I visit cemeteries for genealogical purposes, but not so much to make annual pilgrimages and take flowers. The memory of my loved ones is in my heart.

If I visit Europe again to see where my father was buried, it will be a connect-the-dots experience: crashsite, Gelsenkirchen cemetery in Germany and Neuville-En-Condroz in Belgium. How many AWON fathers have been buried at least four times, like mine has?

Susan Friedhaber-Hard
Dau. of 2nd Lt. John (Jack) H. Friedhaber
735th Sq. / 453rd Bomb. Group, 8th AF
KIA 11 November 1944
Germany



In November 1948, my father's body was returned to the U.S. and I have memories of the funeral. He is buried in my hometown - Lunenburg, Massachusetts - in a plot with his parents and two brothers. His sister and brother-in-law are buried nearby, as is my mother and step-father and other family members. And now, unfortunately, some of my school friends.

My grandfather died when my mother was three so my mother did not really know her father except for her visits to his grave. When she became a widow at 23 she knew it would be important for her daughter to be able to visit her father's grave, as she had been able to do. I am sure my father's family agreed that his body should be returned, especially since they all lived in the same town.

Except for college, I lived in Lunenburg until I was 22, so I had lots of visits to the cemetery. I remember doing errands with my mother and on the way home she would say, "Let's stop by the cemetery to water the flowers." No mention of my father but concern for the flowers. There were always flowers planted for Memorial Day and a holiday wreath was placed in the winter.

It is a lovely small New England cemetery near the town center with slate grave-stones from the 1800's and huge trees and hand pumps to get water from the wells. My piano teacher, Miss Lancey, is buried near my father and I always remember Saturday mornings with her when I still go and put flowers on my father's grave. Most recently I was there in September and I put a pumpkin on his grave. In the winter the cemetery is closed to vehicles but since we are in Massachusetts for three months now I will go a couple of times to Lunenburg and bring my boots so I can hike through the snow to leave something at his grave and the grave of my mother to show they are being remembered.

My cousin's daughter has taken on the responsibility of decorating the graves for Memorial Day. She has inherited the family gene, the green thumb gene. She drives from New Hampshire with all of the plants she has grown and puts them in the ground at the various grave stones. I send her money each year toward her expenses, though she said I do not need to pay her. She is doing it as she has seen the generations before her do it. She is paying her respect to

our ancestors and I am sure her daughters are learning from her so I have no doubt that the tradition will continue.

Betty Volkan
Daughter of Pvt. Jorma Palonen
KIA 21 November 1944
Italy



I have been fortunate with having good health. It was mom's genes - she died last May at 106 1/2 years old.

Mom had a tough time raising us kids, mostly alone. Dad was a civilian on Wake Island and the Japanese would not account for them. It was over two years before we received the first post card from a POW camp, so we know he was alive then. However after the war ended he did not come home with the rest of the men, and we didn't get official notice until two months after the end the war. Mother did not tell us children, but we knew Dad wasn't coming home. I was 10 then and thought it was strange that we did not have even a memorial for dad - even though we did not have his remains.

I did not find his remains until the year 2000. They were re-interred in 1949 in St. Louis with 99 other POWs from Allied nations. We did not receive the notification of that special event so Mother did not know.

My sister and brother were older and they didn't talk of Dad while growing up. Once I found Dad's ashes, my brother and I walked together in discovering what happened. It was all in the National Archives. We even went to Wake Island together after I had traveled to Japan to trace our dad's journey from POW camp to POW camp.

But our older sister did not want to know. She still believed he would return. However, in 2002, we had a memorial at the gravesite, and when both saw our dad's name engraved in granite, his death was real.

Another thing strange was their lack of tears. I cried all those pent-up tears. Perhaps they shed their tears privately. My sister, who was four years older, would not share her memories with me. She told me she and my brother "talked about dad a lot," probably while drinking beer. However, as an adult, I lived in another state and wasn't present during those conversations.

Both my sister and brother died before Mom, and all my aunts are gone, so there is no one left to learn more about Dad from. What I know and remember was all happy, and I have all the letters he wrote to Mom while on Wake. That is such a blessing. Dad wrote to each of us kids several times. He loved his family very, very much, and was due to come home on the day the island was taken over by the Japanese.

I'm glad also that what I say to my fellow AWONers is understood like no others. Thank you for listening.

Mary-Anne Hansen Collins
Youngest daughter of Peter W. Hansen
Wake Island Civilian/Marine
Died 21 March 1945 as a POW in Japan
Buried in Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis



My mom would have left my dad in the Florence American Cemetery since she wasn't convinced it was him, but his parents wanted him home. I remember the memorial service and burial; I was sad because everyone else was sad, but I had no real understanding of the significance. He is now buried in our home church cemetery and my mom graciously allowed his mother to tend the grave until my grandmother died. I could write a book about our family dynamics, but we did have a good childhood, or I should say as good as could have been expected.

...continued on page 28

... *Burials*, from page 27

After my grandmother died, my mom and sister visited the grave and my brother and sister continue that tradition. I have never felt the desire or the need to visit the cemetery, even now when my mother and father are buried side-by-side. Where is Vamik Volkan when you need him? My brother still lives in the house we grew up in, and we drive by the cemetery every time we visit him; but frankly, the thought to stop never enters my mind. You all have given me something to think about.

Norm Burkey
Son of Pfc. Norman Burkey
10th Mountain Division
KIA 12 March 1945
Mt. Della Spe, Italy



I have been reading with interest the conversation about our dads being buried in the magnificent American cemeteries in countries where they died, or being brought back home to be repatriated. I don't remember this topic being discussed before, and obviously is significant to many.

I was almost six years old at the time my mother received the letter about the opportunity to make that decision. My dad's mother died three weeks after he was KIA, and his father was deceased many years before. So my mother was the sole person to make that decision. It was very difficult for her, vacillating between leaving him with his buddies, but being far away; or bringing him home where we could visit his grave often.

She discussed it with me, and I remember her asking my opinion. It was overwhelming for me, and I didn't even want to be involved. After all, I was thinking, "What does it matter? I still don't have a father either way." I still have mixed emotions about how I re-

acted to her. I feel guilty that I was of no help to her, and yet angry that she put that kind of burden on a six-year-old child. She eventually decided to bring him home and he is buried in our town cemetery.

I don't remember much about the funeral other than a very unpleasant feeling about being there. I don't know who I was with or actually if anyone had charge of me, but I have a vision - don't know if it is real or imagined - of being in the background all alone, scared and not quite understanding what was all happening. Old feelings, yet still vivid and unsettling.

Growing up, I didn't like going to the cemetery with my mother to put flowers on his grave, but after she died, I dutifully carried that out seasonally. It was only after AWON (2000), and walking in his steps in the Ardennes (2008) through the gracious help of beloved members of the U.S. Veterans Friends - Luxembourg and the 35th Division re-enactment group of Belgium, that I felt my dad was made real to me, and I started to feel good about visiting his grave. I now look at it as an honor and get there often.

I'm glad this topic was brought up for discussion as it was helpful for me to hear how others dealt with it, and for me to get my feelings out to understanding AWON sibs.

Maggie Fenstermacher
Only daughter of Pvt. Russell D. Stein
3rd Army, 35th Div, 134th Reg, Co. C
KIA 4 January 1945
Battle of the Bulge



Editor's Note

This feature will continue in the October issue of The Star.

If you would like to participate or read discussions like this, remember that the

American WWII Orphans Network

AWON ListServ is a benefit of membership. Contact ListServ Moderators Judy Hoffman at jghoffman@satx.rr.com, or Judy Hathaway at judy0305@yahoo.com, and they will get you registered.

Once registered you will be able to write to and receive messages from the ListServ, just like you do regular email. If you prefer, you can receive messages in digest mode in which several messages are “bundled” into one email. A digest is emailed once a day or less, depending on the amount of traffic. If there is a popular

topic being discussed you might receive more than one digest per day for a couple days.

If you are relatively new to AWON, the AWON ListServ is a great way to introduce yourself and your story to the group, and learn about other members. If you have been a member for a while it is a great way to stay connected with AWON friends or reintroduce yourself and your story. Either way, the AWON ListServ is a way for members to share stories and questions with one another in “real time.”

AWON Board Business 22 March 2013

Financial Report: Treasurer **Jerry Pinkerton** reported that AWON has about \$50,000 in the operating account and about \$37,000 in a certificate of deposit. Since the CD is coming due, Jerry recommended adding \$20,000 from the operating account to the CD and renewing. The board approved.

Junior Historians: **Norm Burkey** suggested that AWON contact the Junior Historians about doing a report on World War II orphans. Norm suggested that AWON offer members as speakers, invite the historians to a nearby gathering, or to the board meeting in St. Louis this fall. The board agreed and Norm will contact them and provide invitations.

AWON Phonenumber: **Gerry Morenski** recently dialed into the AWON phone line and found a few messages. The phone line costs about \$40 per month. Norm will ask **Roger Connor** if he is still monitoring the phone line. If not, Norm offered to take over the job. Norm will assess how much the phone line is used and report back to the board.

Tax Letters: Jerry reported that thank you letters for tax purposes should be sent to any member who

contributes more than \$75. **Judi Kramer** sent this year's letters. Jerry will take over this job next year.

Website Redesign: After discussion, the board voted to table the AWON website redesign process until the fall per Webmaster **Rik Peirson's** request to a board member.

AWON Conference: Conference Co-chair **Barry Barr-Finch** reported to Gerry Morenski that **Penny LeGrand** will be in Seattle soon to scout conference hotels. Barry and Co-Chair **Judi Hollis Kramer** will be added to future board meeting agendas and meeting notification lists.

Membership: Gerry Morenski was contacted by a Korean War orphan regarding membership. The board agreed that, under the bylaws, this person would be an associate member.

Next Board Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the AWON Board of Directors is Sunday, May 19.

Judith Hoffman
Secretary

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

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 photos to the editor in Word, WordPerfect, RTF, formats, or in the body of an email. High resolution jpeg, bitmap, gif or tiff images are preferred. Text and photos also can be mailed. Photos returned upon request.
- Please keep text to one page (500 to 1,000 words),
- 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
1004 Williams Blvd.
Springfield, IL 62704
(217) 787-6512
johnkath5@comcast.net

**Deadline for the
October Issue
is September 1**

AWON Board Business 20 January 2013

Financial Report and Budget: Treasurer **Jerry Pinkerton** gave the financial report. Discussion of the 2013 Budget followed. More was budgeted last year than was actually used, such as supplies, leading to an overall surplus of \$3,900. Multi-year membership renewals resulted in \$10,000 of dues collected in advance. That surplus appears in the cash balance. Last year's dues income was \$23,862 - \$11,000 of which was from multi-year dues. In a normal year, going forward to next year, dues are expected to be in the \$13-\$14,000 range. Pinkerton proposed reducing the budgeted dues income to \$14,000. The Board agreed. Other line items were adjusted. A line item of \$5,000 was added for AWON website redesign, recognizing that the line item may need to be adjusted to \$10,000 or more. Pinkerton commented that the \$5,000 budgeted for the off-year in-person board meeting is what puts the budget in a deficit position; however, the pre-collected dues surplus of \$10,000 makes up for it. The board approved tentatively approving the budget with a deficit of \$6,625, taking into account the surplus dues to cover any deficits.

Website ID and Password: The board discussed the use of a member ID and password for certain pages on the AWON website, acknowledging that Webmaster **Rik Peirson** has the knowledge and history for both. AWON members have the ID and password, and the exact url to access the protected pages, but it was noted that lapsed members still can access the protected pages.

Website Redesign: In keeping with recent updates to AWON's database, brochure, promotional materials, internal processes, and dues structure, the board initiated a review of the website to see what, if any, changes may be needed.

School Project: Due to the lateness of the hour, the school project agenda item was tabled.

Next Board Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the AWON Board of Directors is March 22, 2013.

Judy Hathaway, Acting Secretary

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

American WWII Orphans Network Application, Registration & Renewal Form

- I would like to become a member
- Register my father/family member and me only
- Renew my membership

Names and addresses of your siblings with same father, and/or additional family members:

(Please include information on another sheet, if necessary.)

Information about You

(please print clearly)

Name _____

Spouse's Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ (home, work, cell, other)

E-mail _____

Do you prefer to receive *The Star* electronically? Y N

(Checking Y means you will not receive a copy in the mail. You will receive an email notification to read your copy online.)

Renewing members may skip to Dues Options.

Relationship to Serviceman _____

Your Date of Birth _____

Where did you hear about AWON? _____

Information about WWII Serviceman Who Died

Be as complete as possible. If you do not have some of the information, leave it blank and we may be able to provide it to you. Do not delay mailing the application for lack of information.

Name _____

Last First M.I.

Birth Date _____

Date of Death _____

Place of Death _____

Where Buried _____

Military Unit _____

Service Number _____

Additional details about serviceman's death and/or service: (rank, medals, etc.) _____

Home Town and State _____

Wife's Maiden Name _____

Did widow remarry? Yes No

Membership Levels

Any child of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Coast Guard or Merchant Marine, who was killed, remains missing in action, or who died in the line of duty or later died of wounds or injuries sustained during World War II, is eligible to join as an **Orphan Member**. Any direct relative is eligible to join as a **Family Member**. Any individual, including friends of those killed in World War II, those who wish to participate in AWON activities, or organizations with an interest in and compatible with AWON's purposes and goals, are eligible to join as an **Associate Member**.

Check Your Membership Category:

Orphan Family Associate

Dues Options

Basic annual membership dues are \$25. Sponsor, Gold Star and Multi-year memberships also are available:

	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year
Basic	\$25	\$70	\$110
Sponsor	\$50	\$140	\$220
Gold Star	\$100	\$280	\$440

AWON greatly appreciates gifts beyond these levels.

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

AWON is a humanitarian, nonprofit, nonpolitical, public service organization under Section 501(c)3 of the U.S. Federal Tax code (EINB #91-1538912). Membership is not required to register in our database.

Mail form and check payable to AWON to:

Jerry Pinkerton
 AWON Treasurer
 2848 Woodside St. #401
 Dallas, TX 75204

Editor, The Star
1004 Williams Blvd.
Springfield, IL 62704-2832

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

Jerry Pinkerton jerry.pinkerton@sbcglobal.net

First Inquiry Coordinators

Patty Temte AWON@aol.com

Janice Ott Buterbaugh janicebuterbaugh@gmail.com

Headquarters

Ed Peters edpeters2@comcast.net

ListServ Moderators

Judy Hathaway judy0305@yahoo.com

Judy Geis Hoffman jghoffman@satx.rr.com

Regional Coordinators

Barry Barr-Finch barrfinch1@gmail.com

The Star Editor

Kathy Le Comte johnkath5@comcast.net

Washington, D.C. Events

Phyllis Epstein Louis pelouis@verizon.net

Washington, D.C. Liaison

Lee Mathis jlee123@verizon.net

Webmaster

Rik Peirson rikp@dayone.com