



GPS, chance encounters confirm old war coordinates

Locals help find last fight, burial sites



Elido diPaoli, center, and his son, left, with Laura Sims, right. They are looking at a photo of Sims, age five months, with her parents when her father was on leave in January 1944. The only family photo Sims has, it helped bridge the communication barrier and humanize her quest.

by Laura Smail Sims

In September 2016 I had a goal - to retrace my father's steps as an infantryman in the Italian Campaign of World War II. Pfc. George Smail was in Italy for only four months when he was KIA in the hills north of Rome in July 1944. I was an infant when he died, and learned about my father only through a few family stories and the letters he had written home. I searched for closure now, 72 years later, by learning about my father's days as an American soldier and where he had died in the Italian countryside.

I had researched this trip for months. Learning the path that my father George had taken with his unit was a challenging task. I had studied his letters home, books, military documents, and various U.S. Army reports to gain as much information as I could. I travelled with two remarkable escorts: my elder son, who had always thirsted for information about his grandfather, and an extraordinary young Italian man who acted as translator and guide.

The itinerary I had developed for our trip called for us to begin near where my father had initially been located in an encampment at San Giorgio, north of Naples. As a replacement infantryman, he did not re-

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New dues chart, wreath fund flush

Due to the plan to downsize AWON operations, the board has decided to eliminate the 5-year dues option.

The AWON board has changed the membership dues structure as follows:

1-year \$25 2-year \$48 3-year \$70

The board will contact those who paid for the 5-year option and offer them a refund to the 3-year option, or the opportunity to contribute the refund as a donation to AWON.

Also, the board reports that the Memorial Day Wreath Fund is flush and that no request for donations will be made this year. However, if members wish to make a donation to the wreath fund they may do so by sending a check to the AWON Treasurer and noting "wreath fund" in the memo line. The treasurer's address is on page 27.

Cruise conference photos on website

Photos from the 2016 AWON National Conference Florida cruise are posted on the AWON website.

Go to <http://www.west-point.org/family/awon/floridaconference/>.

There you will find a group photo at the bottom of the page. Above it there are links to pages featuring arrivals, Sharing Circles, the Memorial Service, and dinners.



Click Here if you're internet connected!

AWON Director Email Addresses

Norm Burkey	normanburkey@verizon.net
Mike Forgy	mikeforgy@gmail.com
Norma Nicol Hamilton	rlhnnh@comcast.net
Billie Meeks	billiemmeeks@gmail.com
Gerry Morenski	dutiem@awondb.org
Bonnie Oates	oatesb@twc.com
Ed Peters	edpeters2@mac.com
Jerry Pinkerton	jerry.pinkerton@sbcglobal.net
Diane Pollard	dahpollard@gmail.com



AWON FOUNDER

Ann Bennett Mix

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Dues Jerry Pinkerton

Bookstore Manager Walt Linne

The Star Editor Kathy Le Comte

Webmaster Rik Peirson

ListServ Moderators Judy Hathaway,
Judy Hoffinan

Regional Coordinator Barry Barr-Finch

www.awon.org

email us at: awon@awon.org

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Articles lead to online connection

by Maxine Graham Olson

Every edition of *The Star* contains the stories of war orphans, many of whom have not been able to express fully the loss they have endured by the sacrifices of their fathers' lives in the service of their country. Having a place to explore feelings has been a source of great relief to me.

AWON and *The Star* have another, equally important, function. Through the pages and issues honoring our fathers, the stories of these heroes are kept alive and in the public awareness. This can lead to more discoveries about our dads and their

last days, and we can make connections.

Through AWON and *The Star*, I was able to complete a seven-year quest to find the family of 2Lt. George W. McInis. Gary Brown,

McInis' great-nephew, became interested in his history last Memorial Day and discovered his family remembrances were sketchy. Through a computer search, Brown made contact with a historian who knew about the Father Tributes on the AWON website and *The Star*, and was able to tell Brown that there were references to his great-uncle there. Brown read the Tribute about my dad, 2Lt. Max K. Graham and contacted AWON. AWON First Inquiry Coordinator Patricia Temte sent me Brown's contact information.

I was able to introduce Brown to his great-uncle with copies of the military file which Robert Stuard of the Lacey-Davis Foundation helped me secure. It was a joyous moment for me, knowing that I had been



Maxine's father, 2Lt. Max K. Graham, left, and 2Lt. George W. McInis, right.

instrumental in resurrecting this young man's memory among his family members.

Through the one personal letter from Lt. McInis that survived, and of which Brown sent me a copy, I was able to place Lt. McInis and my dad at the San Antonio Aviation Center about the same time, although in different squadrons. Unfortunately, the letter did not mention any names of Lt. McInis's fellow cadets.

This connection could never have been made without AWON and *The Star*. *Star* editor Kathy Le Comte is to be highly commended for producing the newsletter. Without AWON's officers, there would be no fellowship with fellow orphans or newsletters. I strongly urge members to support these

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March board meeting set in Indianapolis

As required by the by-laws, the AWON Board of Directors will hold a board meeting open to all AWON members. It will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, beginning at 9 a.m., Saturday March 25, 2017, at the Fairfield Inn and Suites Indianapolis Airport. If you are interested in attending, please contact Norm Burkey at 410-638-8970 or normanburkey@verizon.net.

Board outlines AWON downsizing tasks

Input sought for wind-up projects

The AWON Board of Directors held an informal meeting during the 2016 AWON National Conference Florida cruise in October to present the latest information about the organization, including the board's decision to begin "downsizing" operations.

In a PowerPoint presentation the board briefly reviewed the decision to downsize. AWON is an aging organization with decreasing membership, and it has fewer and fewer volunteers willing to lend their time to day-to-day operations. No volunteers came forward for nomination to the board of directors in 2016. AWON also has begun to pay for some services that were once donated. The *President's Letter* in the October issue of *The Star* discussed downsizing, and to date there has been no negative feedback.

The downsizing decision has been under discussion for several years. The topic was first broached at the board's in-person board meeting in 2011 in Indianapolis, with more focused discussion at the 2014 AWON National Conference in Seattle. The AWON Board is unanimously supportive of the decision. AWON's First Founders were consulted and the general consensus was that they were not surprised and felt it was inevitable.

The board defines downsizing as, "The process of simplifying operations, knowing that the day is coming when AWON will no longer have the resources it needs in order to continue operating at the level it has been for a quarter century." Downsizing activity has been going on gradually over

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Kelly presented Forgy service award

Barbara Francis Kelly, daughter of Lt. George Francis, was presented the Col. Jack Forgy Distinguished Service Award. The presentation was made at the 12th AWON National Conference on board the *Freedom of the Seas*.

Barb was honored for her many years of distinguished service to AWON. She has been a member for more than 20 plus years, joining in 1995. From day one she's continuously active in the organization, starting with accepting the book review portion of the fledgling AWON Bookstore from Founder Ann Mix. Eventually she became AWON Bookstore manager, generously spending her time and treasure running the total business out of her home. Through the Bookstore Barb interacted with new members, helping them break through "The Wall of Silence." A numbers

person, Barb has managed both the Bookstore's and conference business accounts for years. She's also AWON's Midwest Regional Coordinator, and has served as a committee member for many national conferences, including co-chairing AWON's 20th Anniversary National Conference in Indianapolis. Congratulations to Barbara Francis Kelly!



Barb Kelly



Attendees at the 2016 AWON National Conference, Port Canaveral, Florida, aboard the *Freedom of the Seas*, Oct. 30 - Nov. 4, 2016.

...Input, from page 4

last few years with simplification of dues structure and the membership/renewal process.

An on-going downsizing activity is identifying what organizational materials should be preserved, and finding a repository that will accept the material. The board also has formed a committee to begin planning for a celebration in 2018. The AWON Memorial Day Wreath program is funded with approximately \$13,000. No new member donations will be solicited but members may choose to contribute. It is estimated that current funds will pay for the program for four more years.

Eventually, the board will begin looking at the dissolution process, including the monetary costs of dissolution and the distribution of any remain-

ing funds and property. Archiving, celebration and shut-down costs are unknown at this point, but the archives and celebration will be the most expensive. As of September 2016, AWON had \$67,700 in unrestricted cash, which does not include the Memorial Day Wreath funds.

It is to be determined what will happen to AWON's other assets, namely the AWON website, Facebook page, the AWON ListServ, the AWON Bookstore, and The Star, as well as the AWON quilt and Bookstore inventory. The board will seek member input as the process continues.

"What we have at the moment is a list of questions," AWON Treasurer Jerry Pinkerton explained. "These issues must be discussed and re-

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AWON brings war orphans to light

The best ideas start with a need. In the case of AWON, the need was to find other people whose fathers were killed in or missing from World War II, and to explore how that loss affected their lives.

In December, AWON marked its 25th anniversary. *The Star* will observe the anniversary throughout this year with articles about AWON events and milestones. With this issue we begin with a brief AWON history lesson.

In early 1990, Ann Bennett Mix of Bellingham, WA, started looking for fellow World War II orphans in order to write a book about their experiences. With the help of a newspaper article and a talk show appearance, she found a handful of orphans. By the end of the year she found a dozen orphans. After more articles in various publications more orphans were found. Ann finally had the subjects for her book.

As hard as it was finding orphans, uncovering facts about them as a group was even more difficult. Few records existed about World War II orphans. Even their number - estimated at 183,000 - is based only on those who applied for GI Bill benefits. But many organizations early on gave Ann support, encouragement and information, including *No Greater Love*, the National Archives, the American Battle

Monuments Commission, Total Army Personnel Command, the American Legion, and others. The information she gathered was shared with her small band of orphans and eventually was the basis of her book, *Touchstones: A Guide to Records, Rights and Resources for Families of American World War II Casualties*. "It seemed to happen all at once," Ann remembered. "One moment it wasn't there, the next moment it was."

In late 1991 Ann's group entered a new phase. In December she registered the name *American WWII Orphans Network* in the state of Washington, and later AWON was registered as a federal non-profit organization. That same month, Ann and a fellow orphan attended a *No Greater Love* treeplanting at Arlington National Cemetery for children of war dead where they handed out flyers about AWON. Ann also met then-U.S. Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas, who served in the same unit as her father, and was wounded near where her father was KIA. Later, Dole agreed to become an AWON national advisor.

After the *No Greater Love* event AWON's star took off. Articles appeared in publications large and small around the country, helping orphans find their way to AWON. However the sudden member-

ship growth held up Ann's original book idea, and more attention needed to be given to the growing organization. Both of these problems were solved. Ann soon met Susan Johnson Hadler, another World War II orphan, who helped her co-author *Lost in the Victory: Reflections of American War Orphans of World War II*. Then another orphan, Lorin McCleary, contacted Ann and suggested holding a member meeting in Washington, D.C. Twelve of those in attendance donated seed money to finance the organization's operations. They are known today as AWON's First Founders.

With money, a governing body, and continued publicity, more orphans found their way to AWON. The first AWON National Conference was held in Seattle in 1995. Soon volunteers helped with the newsletter (*The Star*), developed an email server (now the AWON ListServ), and eventually a website. To keep track of member data AWON created the only database of fathers killed or missing in action from World War II, which continues to grow.

From its beginning AWON has opened the nation's eyes to a group that was largely unseen - World War II orphans. Staff at the National Archives in St. Louis

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Welcome New Members

Davina Toups, TX, granddau of PVT Alvis S. Brown, Army
Davis Keele, TX, grandson of PVT Alvis S. Brown, Army
Elda Ruby Hoffer, SD, dau of PVT Bruce E. Ruby, Army
Sandra Britton, MI, dau of PVT Frederick B. Coldicott, Army

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

...Anniversary, from page 6

now have a better understanding of what their work means to families seeking information. Visitors to the National WWII Memorial can visualize the human cost of the war at the Wall of Freedom as the wall of gold stars was Ann's idea, given to the memorial's architect. World War II is now a National Day of Remembrance, enacted by Congress and supported in part by AWON. AWON has a relationship with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to help children of MIAs. Most importantly, AWON continues to look for World War II orphans and support members in their search for their fathers.

"We have traveled far beyond those secret, empty spaces so deep within our hearts," Ann has said. "We hope we can help others remember the depth of the sacrifice made in World War II that included the widows and orphans."

The 25th Anniversary of AWON series will continue in the April issue of *The Star*.

...Input, from page 5

solved by a sub-committee and then presented to the membership."

At this time the board is focused on the preparation and placement of AWON materials in an appropriate repository. The board is working on a list of items in the AWON Archives and will ask for members to join a committee to work on what items should be archived. The board seeks suggestions on potential repositories for the AWON Archives. The board's main desire is that the facility will keep the archives easily available for future research.

Preliminary work also has begun for planning the 2018 Celebration. At this time the board is planning to hold the event in Washington, D.C. A steering committee will be created in the near future. Anyone wishing to be involved or hav-

ing ideas is asked to contact the board.

In the meantime, AWON continues as normal. The current board has agreed to stay on for a few more years. Members are encouraged to continue meeting on the local level at Regional Gatherings, which are featured in every issue of *The Star*. The newsletter will continue publishing as usual, and the AWON website will continue. It's even possible after 2018 another convention with a modified format might develop an interested following. As always, members' suggestion are welcome.

"We do not know now when the end of AWON will come," the board stated in the Power-Point. "We have some time... We plan to seek your participation in each of these actions and you can begin now by providing your thoughts and ideas to the board."

Time to prepare family records

by Norma Nicol Hamilton

Our life line clocks are ticking. It's time to make arrangements for the preservation of your father's records. The research we've accomplished on behalf of our dear fathers needs to be saved.

I wonder how many of us have arranged for the preservation or disposition of our family records? If arrangements are not made, the records which you've so diligently researched may end up in a distant cousin's garage, getting moldy, ruined or worse - lost.

Most of us orphans are in our 70s and 80s. The time for action is now. Here are several questions for your consideration:

- Do you intend to preserve your father's records before you pass on?
- If the answer is 'yes,' do you expect to use preservation methods yourself?
- If you've chosen not to have a family member safeguard them, then whom, and where?

Here are some steps to follow to organize your collection for yourself, and the future:

Create an inventory - Make a list of the items, organizing items into categories, if necessary, such as photos/photo albums, letters, diaries, books and yearbooks,

and personal items. If you can, quantify how much you have by the number of boxes or size of the boxes. Professional repositories calculate the size of their collections by how many cubic feet they contain. Knowing the box size or number of boxes you have is a good substitute.

Store your items safely - Use acid-free boxes, paper and photo sleeves. Keep them out of direct light. Keep them in a stable environment - not too damp, not too dry. Ideally keep them in your living space, which already is temperature and moisture controlled. Attics, garages and basements are not ideal unless they are temperature and humidity controlled. Some companies that provide archival merchandise include University Products (UniversityProducts.com), Print File Archival Storage (PrintFile.com), Hollinger Metal Edge (hollingermet-aledge.com) and Gaylord Archival (gaylord.com).

Decide what happens to your collection - Research potential repositories. Start local. Consider your local public library, historical society, college or other groups interested in local history. Other places to consider are the high school your father attended, his college or university, and the military museum of the branch in which he served. Visit the websites

of any identified repositories for more information, then contact the librarian or archivist by phone or email. Describe the items you have and why they are a good 'fit' with collections the institution currently holds. Keep accurate notes of your conversation.

I hope these tips will get you thinking and nudge you into action. Your local public or academic librarian or genealogical society will be able to assist you. Some community colleges offer courses in How to preserve your family's records.

If you have any questions you may contact me at rlhnhnh@comcast.net. You also can contact the editor of *The Star* to post your question or tips in the newsletter. Your questions and answers may appeal to many of our members and *The Star* is an excellent venue.

Note: The author is not a certified archivist. She holds her BA (U.C. Davis 1993) and MA (California State University, Sacramento 2004) in history. She has completed primary document research at the archives of several U.S. Navy repositories, as well as the National Archives and local repositories in Lima, Ohio. Since 2009 she has maintained membership in the Society of American Archivists (SAA) on behalf of AWON.

AWON Connections

Pictures and Stories of Members
Gathering Around the Country



Sondra Sarles, Patricia Gaffney-Kindig and Robbie Thomas got together for lunch in Lakewood, CO, on a warm, sunny day in early October. Sondra was on a trip west when she stopped to see some family and AWON sisters. *Patricia*

Special guest planned for Annual York gathering

The annual York, PA AWON Gathering will be held Saturday, April 1, 2017 in York at Hoss's Steak and Seafood Restaurant. The group meets from 11:30 to 3:30.

This year Lynne has invited a woman who grew up in Nazi Germany. Lynne says she is very interesting and seems to enjoy telling her story. The German woman married an American soldier.

For more information, contact Lynne at lynnelec@aol.com; 1728 Oakes Ave., York, PA 17404-6701; 717-757-9424 (home) or 717-487-8677 (cell).



Sharon Connor, Roger Connor and Dale Roybal met at the Point Loma Cafe in San Diego, in December. Like AWON, our So-Cal group may be downsizing. We have had as many as eleven in the past. We always enjoy ourselves, whether the group is large or small, but we miss those who are not able to attend. Topics we discussed were what AWON has meant to us, the cruise/conference, and genealogy. *Roger*



North Carolina's Rondy Elliott, right, happened to be in State College, PA, when she met new AWONer Ken Sills on the suggestion of PA AWONer extraordinaire Lynne Lechrone (see above). Rondy and Ken instantly recognized each other as fellow AWONers. A cosmic happening? Lynne had purchased a copy of Rondy's book, *Unmistakable Beams of Light* for Ken, which Rondy personally delivered. *Rondy*

Family places collection in hometown

Margraten adopter creates memorial, multi-media tributes to Reese crash



The memorials for the Reese crew in IJmuiden, Netherlands. Original photo of Lt. Reese, seen below, is located at Robert E. Nail Jr. Archives in Albany, TX.



AWONer Candace Kiene has shared two photos with *The Star* that show how deeply Margraten grave adopters care about AWON's loved ones.

Candace's uncle, 2Lt. H. Carroll Reese, is buried at the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten. He was killed in a bombing raid over IJmuiden on March 26, 1944, after the B-26 bomber he was piloting was hit by flak just after "bombs away" but before the bombs were released from the plane. The entire crew was killed. Roger Zoontjens of Holland adopted the grave of Reese's crewmate, Sgt. Paul Scott. Roger is working on a memorial for the crew at the crash site. The two photos at left show the memorial. Roger also has created a website about the Reese crash at <http://ww2investigation-fam-scott.jouwweb.nl/> and a short film, which can be seen on Youtube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Eo3_GINfts. Lt. Reese can be seen in the bottom left image, while Sgt. Scott can be seen in the top left image in the newspaper. The Reese photo is located at the Robert E. Nail Jr. Archives in Albany, Texas, Reese's hometown. This is a good example of finding an appropriate repository for your personal collection (see "Time to prepare family records," page 8). The nephew of the original adopter now tends Reese's grave. Candace is thankful for both her uncle's grave adopter and Roger. "I appreciate everything that those who are connected to the adoption program do, the universe of honor created for the soldiers, and the wealth of information being put together for history," she says. "Plus, it's good to have allies."

...Sims, from front page

ceive his permanent assignment to the 34th Infantry Division, 133rd Regiment, until he was in that camp. I planned our trip to hug the eastern Italian coastline for about 200 miles before turning inland toward Florence to the area where I believed my father was KIA. I knew the odds of finding the location where he had been killed were against us, but I knew I had to try.

The official form from the U.S. War Department indicated that after George had been KIA in the hills near Castellina Maritima, he had been buried at a cemetery in Follonica, about 100 miles to the south on the seacoast. It seemed counterintuitive to seek a cemetery in advance of the site of where the death had occurred, but since we were travelling north, the cemetery location was the first we encountered. When we inquired in Follonica about the location of this cemetery, no one seemed to know.

My son took what vague geographic information we had about the cemetery's setting and programmed it into the GPS. The directions we had were imprecise, but we looked for landmarks our informants had given us. Soon we were driving on a rocky road lined with tall cypress trees outside of the town, heading toward a beautiful villa at the top of the hill. Stopping at the home, my traveling companions told the young woman who answered the door why we were there and what we were seeking. She responded, "I'm not really sure about any cemetery here. It

is possible, though, that there was one in the area near the cypress trees that you passed along the road." She then closed the door abruptly, not providing any further information.

With this exciting development, we drove back and stopped at the bottom of the hill. The lane bordered by cypress trees looked just like all those movies set in Tuscany of which I'm so fond. As we stopped, a man in a well-used, mud-spattered white truck stopped beside our car. "Oh, great..." I thought. "He's going to arrest us for trespassing on his property." The man emerged from his truck wearing a T-shirt with the Texas Longhorns symbol prominently displayed on the front. This a good omen, I thought.

When our guide explained why we were there, and that we were looking for the place where the U.S. Military Cemetery had been located, he paused. I jumped

out of the car to hear more clearly what he was telling us.

Franco, from the white truck, hesitated for what seemed to me to be an interminably long time, then haltingly said, "I do remember my father-in-law telling of digging up caskets containing the bodies of American soldiers. That would have been about, let's see, 1948, give or take a year or so. The cemetery was right here, up on that hill so the wooden crosses would be noticed. Of course, it's not here now, as you know."

I was speechless, my heart pounding. My father had been buried here for five years

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Outside Follonica. Sims, right, and her guide, Alessandro diMauro, center, were trying to pinpoint the location of the temporary U.S. cemetery when the owner of the land, Franco, left, happened to drive by, stopped, and confirmed they were at the right spot.

...Sims, from page 11

before his remains were returned to the cemetery on the hill in Pennsylvania for his final resting place.

As the men were talking, I ventured alone into the area where the cemetery had once been and olive trees now flourished. Across the way was a flock of wild doves, another good omen for our successful journey, I thought. We had entered this place with cypress trees lining our path, the symbol of mourning and death, and we left from an area of olive trees, the sign of peace and reconciliation. A beautiful, peaceful spot. "Rest in Peace" took on new meaning for me here in Italy.

Jubilant after finding what had been the temporary cemetery in Follonica, we were quiet as we made our way to the next stop - Cecina. Each of us was immersed in our own reverie of what we had just experienced.

Cecina, located directly on the seacoast, was a stronghold of the Germans in 1944 and the site of one of the bloodiest battles north of Rome. Today it is a beautiful city, with no trace of the horror that had taken place there decades earlier. I kept thinking that this ambiance was quite a contrast to what George must have experienced that hot July, 72 years earlier.

The previous day we had located the site of the temporary U. S. Military Cemetery in Follonica where George's body had been buried for over five years before being repatriated to the United States. I had felt both exhilarated and relieved then; today I was anxious about what we would find.

However, cautious optimism prevailed as the theme of the day as we were all hopeful that we would find the location where he had been killed.

The U.S. Army's Confidential Report of Burial, dated 14 Jul 1944, listed six digits as the coordinates for the place of death. However, we learned that two alphabetical letters preceding this series of numbers were needed to plot the actual physical location on a map; these letters were missing from the report we had.

However, with his technical skills and the help of Google maps, my son was able to decipher the alphabetical code. When these

two letters were added to the numbers on the Burial Report, a location appeared on the GPS pointing to the spot that we believed was the correct site where George was KIA. Finding the coordinates on the map buoyed our hopes that the day's quest would be successful. This evidence was corroborated by information I had



The diPaoli family, which now includes a granddaughter, left, talk with Sims, unseen behind Elido, and Allesandro, right, in the clearing where Sims believes her father was KIA.

found about his unit's troop movements; at that time, George's unit was in a rural location east of Cecina, inland near the small towns of Castellina de Maritima and Pastina.

Our guide had found a detailed local map that provided valuable assistance in our search for this location. It certainly came in handy as the GPS quit soon after we left the major highway. We started to climb toward the site we sought, the roads becoming smaller and narrower, nearly impassable. Soon we found ourselves in a heavily forested area with abundant underbrush,

eerily similar to how the area had been described in the Army's Company A Morning Reports in early July 1944. The GPS suddenly awakened, and the map coordinates unmistakably pointed to a clearing with a house next to it. We were near the villages named in the report where George was killed in action.

Following the GPS directive, we started down a small dirt road only to be stopped by a formidable, eight-foot high iron gate. We debated among ourselves whether to leave the car and continue on foot as the GPS showed the sought-after site was only a short distance away. We sat in the car before this gate for at least 20 minutes, mostly in silence.

Finally, I stepped out of the car, disheartened and emotionally drained. I turned to my companions, "This is so disappointing. At every stage of our journey, we have come closer and closer to this place. Now I feel I have come so far only to be turned away so close to our goal. I need a minute alone to process this." My emotions were on a roller coaster. Was this the closest I would ever come to finding where my father had lost his life?

As we were standing by the car contemplating our options, a well-dressed man riding a BMW motorcycle stopped behind us. Mr. DiPaoli did not look friendly, scowling at us. Our translator quickly jumped from the car and explained to him in Italian what we were doing there.

I noticed that diPaoli's demeanor immediately softened. He stepped back, then opened the gate; a sign, I felt, that he was more amenable to our being on his property. However, he kept saying in halting English, "No, no. I don't know." Our guide translated his words into English for me: "Come and speak with my son. He's at my house. Follow me." Despite the language barrier and his initial wariness of us, I felt diPaoli was beginning to understand why we were

on his property, and he was doing his best to accommodate us.

We followed the man on the motorcycle for about a half-mile to a clearing. Off to one side stood a large, well-maintained stucco house, surrounded by metal fencing and another ornate gate. Although we were not invited into the compound, he called to his son - a man in his 50s with a long, gray ponytail - to meet us.

My son stepped up and showed him the Google map on his iPhone. He appeared shocked, stepped back, then said to his father with great animation in his voice, as he pointed to the screen, "This is your house.

This area is right next to your house. Don't you see? This clearing is where the woman's father was killed in World War II; it's right here. This is what they've come to see."

As our guide translated the verbal exchange between father and son for me, I was shocked to the core, once again. As I began to cry, I felt hands on my shoulders - one set coming from the older gentleman, the owner of this house, the other from my son.

I walked a short distance from the others. I needed quiet, and to be alone. So, this was where my father, whom I had never known but for his folksy letters home, had been taken from us.

The area before us was about an acre, with an elevated ridge on one side. The older man explained that as the Germans were retreating, they were probably able to see and take down approaching American troops without much difficulty. It was so difficult to imagine the horrors of battle here, in this calm, serene site, among flourishing olive trees, the symbol of peace. I bent to pick up several stones as mementos from this site; all were heart-shaped.

My mind wandered. What was George thinking as he stood in this very spot? No



PFC George D. Smail

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ABMC staff show heart in service

by Laura Smail Sims

When I started my “trip of a lifetime” I had two constant companions with me: my older son, Jonathan, on whom I relied for emotional sustenance and technical expertise, and Alessandro di-Mauro, an extremely capable young Italian man who served as translator, driver, and guide. We became a formidable trio, driving for hundreds of miles together, and successfully locating where my father was killed and where he was buried before his remains were returned to the States in 1949.

Of course, we wanted to see all the noted battlegrounds, museums, and cemeteries along the way, but I also wanted to interact with those who may have had memories of the American troops as they stormed through Italy. Throughout the journey we met many outstanding individuals - some of whom are mentioned in my preceding article in this newsletter - each anxious to help us. We looked forward to these person-

al encounters because they added important details to what we knew from our research conducted an ocean away.

Many AWON members have visited the American cemeteries abroad and have commented about how helpful and compassionate the staff attending these cemeteries were to them. We also felt this way. In particular, there were two individuals associated with the American cemeteries in Italy who, we believe, deserve special commendation for the information they shared and the care they provided in answering our endless questions.

Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno (Near Anzio)

The American Battle Monuments Commission, a U.S. government agency, is responsible for operating and maintaining 25 war cemeteries around the world. The superin-

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...Sims, from page 13

doubt he was in close combat with the enemy as described in the regimental history. He died due to SFW - Severe Fragment Wounds - to the abdomen and left eye, according to the Army's Confidential Report of Burial, in a “barrage of artillery fire,” as the Chaplain had written.

My emotions were a tangled web. Rational me was astonished to think that we had found the actual site where my father had been killed; emotional me was simply overwhelmed with standing on this ground. The sheer beauty of the countryside had captured my soul. That beauty contrasted starkly with the carnage I knew had taken place in this very place 72 years ago. I was

having tremendous difficulty reconciling the two.

A New Testament passage flashed before me, from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians, 4:7 - “the peace ... that passes all understanding...” - a verse that has appealed, yet confused me for decades. I now thought of that phrase in a new way. I will never understand why there were errors on my father's induction papers, why he was drafted at age 36, why he was sent to North Africa and Italy to fight instead of remaining stateside, why he had to die in this clearing. But I was at peace here. This was a beautiful place, giving new meaning to the phrase, “Rest in Peace.” And that was what I wished for all of us who had participated in this remarkable journey.

tendent on site is usually a retired military officer while the assistant superintendent frequently is a resident of the country in which the cemetery is located.

At the end of World War II, both the Italians and the Americans wanted to consolidate the 21 temporary cemeteries in the country, so they chose two sites for permanent cemeteries. One was in southern Italy, called the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery, located in Nettuno, near Anzio. The Florence American Cemetery is located south of Florence.

At rest at these two cemeteries are soldiers who were not returned to the United States when the temporary cemeteries in Italy were closed in the late 1940s. Families of fallen soldiers were contacted to see if they wished the remains of their loved ones to be returned to the United States. I have seen the paperwork in which my mother instructed the U.S. Military to return my father's remains to his hometown in Pennsylvania for reburial in 1949.

Even though it was near closing time when we arrived, the assistant superintendent of the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery, who introduced herself as Veronica, patiently took her time in talking with us and learning about our journey. This beautiful young Italian woman listened carefully to our requests about the cemeteries in Italy where deceased American soldiers had been buried.

After our discussion, Veronica excused herself and disappeared into a back room of the visitor center from which she soon emerged. "Here," she said, as she handed us a copy of a map that showed the locations of the 21 temporary cemeteries that had existed during the war. This may help you in your search. The cemetery in Follonica, a seacoast community where my father

had been buried, doesn't exist anymore. And, I'm sorry but I don't have any specific information as to where it was located." I was disheartened at this news, but even more determined to find the cemetery's location when we reached the town of Follonica.

As we were preparing to leave, Veronica said, "We will be lowering the flag soon. Would you and your son like to help us by folding the flag today?" I considered this request a rare privilege to be asked to perform this act in a beautiful American military cemetery near where my father had been killed. We followed her to the flagpole. A beautiful recording of *Taps* began to play, and my tears began to flow. What an incredible honor to be able to share this moment with my son.

Another Italian couple was there with their young daughter, and Veronica asked if they would like to participate in folding the flag on the other flagpole. Witnessing the depth of their emotion, I asked if they had relatives who had been buried in that cemetery. "No," the gentle-



Top: Jonathan Sims, left, folding the American flag with his mom at Sicily - Rome American Cemetery. Bottom: Florence American Cemetery.



...continued on page 16

man answered through his tears. "We just thought it was important for our daughter to know about the brave men who are buried here, and we are honored to participate in this ceremony today."

Veronica gave us the opportunity to participate in one of the most moving of ceremonies and had provided encouragement for pursuing the location of the Follonica cemetery. For that I shall always be grateful.

Florence American Cemetery

The U.S. Fifth Army liberated this area on August 3, 1944, about two weeks after my father was killed 40 miles to the west. Framed by wooded hills and located astride the Greve River, the cemetery site occupies one of the most beautiful areas in Italy.

As with the other American cemetery in Italy, we were greeted warmly by both the superintendent and assistant superintendent on duty that afternoon. After touring the beautiful grounds and the visitors' center, we stood to appreciate the row upon row of white crosses that rose from an immaculately manicured lawn. What an impressive sight!

We made our way into the administrative office to greet the staff on duty. There we met a family from the United States who had come to learn if the older gentleman's uncle was buried in this cemetery. After examining the files, the man was told that his uncle was not buried there. However, the staff courteously and patiently responded to the man's questions and told him of options he could follow to answer any remaining issues. I was very impressed by the manner in which the staff dealt with what was clearly a difficult time for this family.

As the assistant superintendent, a young Italian man, turned to us, I said, "I couldn't help but overhear how politely you dealt with that family's questions."

"Oh," the young man replied. "That's what we are here for. Families come here all the

time asking similar questions. There are so many families that don't know what happened to their loved ones after the war, and we help as much as we can. Now, what can I do for you?"

When I explained our pilgrimage and the reason for our visit to this cemetery, he paused. "You know, don't you, that your father is not buried here," the man stated stoically.

"Oh, yes," I replied. "We do know that. We just wanted to pay our respects to those who are buried here and to thank you for your service. It is a beautiful site, and Americans can be proud that their deceased military from World War II are buried here."

The young man, whose name we never learned, seemed upset at my response. I was unsure why what I had said had offended him. "I'm sorry," I said.

"Oh, it is I who should be sorry," the man apologized, his voice wavering. "You and your family have come so far to see us, and we cannot give you any more information than you already have. Give me a moment and let me see what I can do."

He made his way to a corner of the room where columns of books were stacked. After searching a while, he straightened up, smiling, holding a slim volume in his hands. "This is what I was looking for — *Il Prezzo della Liberta*. It lists the names of soldiers from the U.S. Army's 34th Infantry Division who died in battle. That was your father's unit - right? Let's see if we can find his name in here."

The assistant superintendent of the Florence American Cemetery took a few minutes to finger through the book. "Ah, here it is!" he exclaimed. I looked on as he pointed out that on page 47, there was a listing of "I caduti Usa del 13-14 Luglio (U.S. soldiers killed on 13-14 July)." There were three columns under the heading *Cognome e Nome; Data; Regg.to*. George D. Smail was the fourth name out of 24, listed as having died 13/07/1944, 133rd Regiment. This was written confirmation of my father's death, doc-

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Stars of The Star

Volunteers who make AWON work

**Paul Bremer
and
Sam Tannenbaum**

2016 AWON Conference Co-Chairs

*Thank you, your spouses and team,
and previous conference chairs and
teams, for throwing the party.*

There are more than 115 AWON volunteers who donate their time and money to activities like updating the AWON website, coordinating overseas wreaths, arranging regional gatherings, mailing AWON materials and much more. Many members have been doing these jobs for years and would be happy for some help or for someone else to take over.

Contact a board member to volunteer.



...ABMC, from page 16

umented in a book published in the Italian language. I was astounded.

This young man demonstrated such generosity of service to us, which I interpreted as testimony to the gratitude Italians have for American sacrifice during World War II. I was grateful for having met him, and appreciated learning about his devotion to assisting those who sought information about their missing loved ones. We Americans are fortunate to have such capable caretakers at our military cemeteries abroad.

McConnell passes in NJ

Philip J. McConnell, 77, of Brick, New Jersey, passed away November 14, 2016. He was the son of Pvt. Philip W. McConnell and Rose Hagen. After many years in the corporate world, he owned and operated a dry cleaner in McAfee, NJ. He is survived by his wife, Karen Ann, of 55 years; two daughters; six grandchildren; and sister, AWONer Millie McConnell Cavanaugh.

Phil requested donations in his name to AWON at 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216.

...Articles, from page 3

organizations and use them to provide more contacts to their fathers. Through these organizations and their world-wide network, another largely forgotten World War II hero has been honored.

Editor's note: About two months after Maxine submitted this article she discovered some "new" information in her own document collection:

I could not resist sharing this information with you. I was looking through some old records on my dad and noticed some old, stapled-together sheets of paper from the Aloe Army Air Field, Victoria, Texas, where my dad took flight training. It was his copy of some orders which, if I can read all the abbreviations correctly, indicate that the groups of 150 men were discharged from military service 2 Nov 1943 to enable them to accept appointments as 2nd Lieutenants or "FO, UAS," and were ordered to "EAD at this sta DO, effective 3 Nov 43." There were 150 airmen being released as 2nd Lieutenants. Both my dad's name and that of Lt. McInis are included in this list. Their names are included on another list of 98 being sent to Dale Mabry Field, Florida. The field is narrowing. Now, all I need is an interpreter for all the military abbreviations. Maxine

The journey to bring a father home

Navigating through shadows to light

by Kathy Le Comte

There always was something missing in Sharon Estill Taylor's life, and it wasn't just the presence of her father. Yes, his physical being wasn't there, but what she was really longing for was to know him, inside as well as out. How was that to be done, when he was killed in his P-38 Lightning when she was just three weeks old? By finding him, of course.

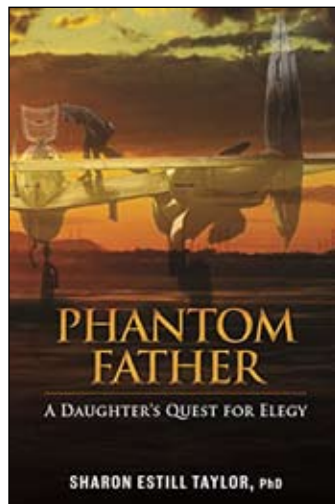
In *Phantom Father, A Daughter's Quest for Elegy*, Taylor chronicles her effort to find her father's crash site, and through patience and perseverance, bring him home.

Taylor always yearned for her father. The early chapters describe her childhood with her mother, eventual step-father, and her imaginary friends. They all, essentially, were stand-ins for her father in different ways, each having their own flaws, but the "friends" caused the most confusion. Also confusing, even to the author, was the response she gave when strangers would compliment her red hair: "Thank you, my daddy died in the war." The little girl was trying to create a reality that included her father.

Lt. Shannon E. Estill never seemed so real to Taylor as when she spent time with her Nana Lettie, Estill's mother, who would tell her stories about her father and, eventually, give Taylor the break she ultimately needed to know him on a per-

sonal level - letters. Hundreds of them, written by her father to her mother, from high school until just days before his plane crashed in Germany in April 1945.

The letters finally were something real, not something Taylor had to make up to bring her father close to her. Letters, after all, reveal so much. Personality and penmanship. Humor and brains.



And love. The letters overflowed with love to his sweetheart, Mary, and to his darling little girl when he learned "he" was a "she." Finally, Sharon's love for her father could join in.

The letters, which are transcribed abundantly and to great effect in *Phantom Father*, set off the second phase of Taylor's quest to know Estill. They were a veritable roadmap to finding him, in all possible ways. Containing names of fellow pilots and his crew chief, Sharon found Estill's last friends, who told her stories about her father no one

else could tell, and even introduced her to a P-38, which gave her more vision and direction.

The letters became the focus of her Ph.D. as she studied the effects of fatherlessness from war. That's how Taylor found AWON, which is acknowledged many times. Included is Taylor's Letter to the Editor of *Newsweek*, in response to an October 1998 article about Ann Mix and AWON: "... the truth 'Daddy dying in the war' defines our generation... and brings us to deeper insight and loneliness." Until AWON.

In 2001, Taylor embarked on the final phase of her quest - the crash site and bringing her father home. She is put in touch with a German air historian who identifies Estill's crash site. The owners of the field agree to an informal survey and debris is found. The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, now the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, conducts an investigation - but it's not complete when they hit a snag. It's a suspenseful moment requiring unconventional diplomacy.

Taylor accomplishes the impossible. Running tandem with the story of her four-year search are her thoughts that she kept in a journal. The book is blessed with many photos, letters and maps. *Phantom Father* is about a father being found, not only in the earth but on paper. Taylor's puzzle is solved.

Phantom Father is available at amazon.com and myphantom-father.com.



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



BOOKS

Authors in **bold** are orphan or family members • Items marked with an asterisk (*) include P&H

____ *A Bit of Earth*
by **Wendy Crisp Lestina** **NEW!!** **\$13.95**

____ *K.I.A.: An Orphan's Search for His Father Through the Fog of War*
by **Patrick Audinet** **NEW!!** **\$10.00***
All proceeds from Audinet book benefit AWON

____ *The Beauty of What Remains: Family Lost, Family Found*
by **Susan Johnson Hadler** **NEW!!** **\$15.00***

____ *In Search of A pilot: Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand*
by **Marilynn Rustand Lieurance** **\$7.00***

____ *My Father: More than a Picture, a Beer Bottle and a Flag*
by **Jerry W. Pinkerton** **\$12.00***

____ *The Measure of a Man: My Father, the Marine Corps, and Saipan*
by **Kathleen Broome Williams** **\$28.00***

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Lives of America's Children*
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by **Imogene Woods** and Twelve WWII Infantrymen **\$15.00**

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by **Clinton Frederick** **\$26.95**

____ *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 Lt. Col. Jacques Adnet USAF (ret.) **REDUCED! \$5.00**

____ *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*
foreword by **Damon L. Gause** **\$21.95**

____ *No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love: A Son's Journey to
Normandy*
by **Walter Ford Carter** **REDUCED! \$18.00**

____ *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
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____ *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**

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



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



CD / DVD

____ *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*
(VHS) **REDUCED!** was \$5.00 \$ 3.00*

____ *We Speak Their Names: A Tribute to Our Fathers* (VHS)
produced by Patrick Tierney and **Terry Boettcher**
REDUCED! was \$15.00 \$ 3.00*

____ *AWON 2000 Conference: Journeys - Finding Our Fathers*
(VHS) by Justin Taylan was \$15.00 \$ 5.00*

____ *Sleep My Sons: The Story of the Arisan Maru*
by **Shawnee Brittan** **REDUCED!** was \$30.00 \$20.00*

AWON Logo Products

Close Out on the following AWON merchandise:

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____ *AWON bookmarks
(circle amount: 1/\$1.00, 5/\$3.00, 10/\$5.00)

____ *AWON auto magnet \$6.00
____ *AWON holiday ornament \$10.00

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____ * 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.

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

Brittany ceremony honors three soldiers

In October, AWON Overseas Friend Jean-Marc Lesueur presented a wreath on behalf of AWON at an informal ceremony at the Brittany American Cemetery. It was the sixth annual Cérémonie annuelle au Brittany American Cemetery et hommage au Mesnil-tôve. About 75 people gathered to hear the stories of three soldiers at their gravesites, followed by lunch in a village where the GIs fought and died during the Battle of Normandy.



From left: Jean-Marc Lesueur, event organizer Jean-François Pellouis, and a former USAF officer who lives in Brittany.

J-Marc talked about Sgt. Alden H. Lightfoot, who was KIA on August 7, 1944 when a German fighter-bomber released a bomb directly over his position near Ducey, France. Platoon Sgt. Lightfoot, Battery D, 465th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion, 3rd Army, and three others, were killed instantly while they were sleeping, according to a letter sent to Lightfoot's mother, which Lesueur read. One of the others was assistant platoon commander 2Lt. Roger D. Ramey, who was the father of two girls.



J-Marc has a special request for next year's ceremony. He would like to introduce another soldier buried at Brittany and asks AWON members for suggestions. You may contact J-Marc at [lesueur.jean-marc@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jean-marc@wanadoo.fr).

If I Had a Ship

by Capt. William B. Elder Jr.
written to his wife, date unknown

*Maybe: I would go afar
To some unknown island in the sea.
Perhaps there'd be peace and rest
Awaiting there for me.*

*Who knows? I might sail to France
To see the cathedrals there,
Maybe I'd find in one these
My peace and contentment rare.*



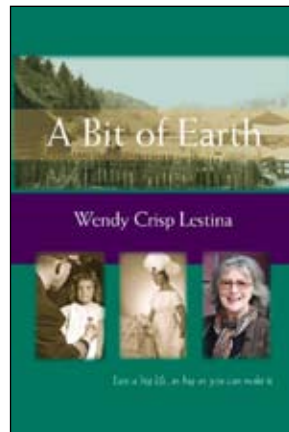
Because of this poem, AWONer John Elder's mother decided to let his father rest in peace in France. Capt. Elder is buried at Brittany American Cemetery. Elder's mother never had the opportunity to visit her husband's grave, but John, his son and his daughter have.

Farm calls for girl living dad's dream

Wendy Lestina has lived a full life - in cities big and small, building an eclectic career, surrounded by interesting people. But the central story of her life was the father she never knew.

Lestina lays it all out in *A Bit of Earth*, a 160-page memoir. It starts with a car burglary in Manhattan that results in the loss of her dearest possession - her father's posthumously-awarded Silver Star for gallantry in action on Okinawa. From there she moves back and forth through her interesting life, both seamlessly and humorously, but always focused on her

father's mandate to "live a big life, as big as you can make it, big enough for both of us."



It was a tough challenge for a woman, and one that Lestina

tackled with varying degrees of success. She was the editor-in-chief of a woman's magazine in New York and the spokesperson for a national businesswomen's organization, but cites as her failures several marriages, the loss of friendships, and some unprofitable business ventures.

Lestina's tale takes readers through 23 essays and across the country, from small towns in Minnesota and Oregon to Los Angeles and New York City - winding up at a small family farm she inherits in northern California. The big city girl goes home.

Her story follows the historical context of the second half of the 20th century, but the way she adapts to the cultural changes of her generation is not typical.

"There's never a predictable moment as Wendy ventures far and wide, only to return to her ancestral home bearing the gifts of a life well and truly lived," writes one reviewer.

"Wendy shares her big life of small moments, bringing us wry, canny thoughts and deadpan laughs," notes another.

This is a brave memoir. Lestina never presents herself as victim or hero, but rather as a woman who's willing to take risks to search for what's real and lasting - love and humor.

One online reader review concludes, "A good memoir makes you reflect on your own random walk, and Lestina's does just that."

A Bit of Earth is available through the AWON Bookstore.

Malone releases CD of '50s musical tunes

AWONer Maggie Malone has released a debut nine-song CD called *Mixed Emotions*, dedicated to her dad and mom.

In an essay included with the album, Malone writes about the personal connection she felt to 1950s movie musicals, the Great American Songbook and Broadway.

"It occurred to me that the musicals that meant the most spoke to me of the loss of my father in World War II when I was three years old," she explains. "In *Cinderella*, the heroine was fatherless but the animals sang to her and she won the prince's heart. *Showboat* and *Carousel* featured fathers who loved their daughters and sang to them, then left them. Weary GIs listened to Jane Froman sing *Embraceable You* in *With a Song in my Heart*, and *White Christmas* evoked faint memories of my dad crooning the songs of the day, just like Bing."

Malone thanks AWON for making her CD possible.

"I realize I would never have been able to write so openly of missing my dad if I hadn't found AWON! If you get and enjoy my CD, drop me a note!"

The CD includes songs by Rodgers and Hart, Jimmy Van Heusen and Jerome Kern. Malone is accompanied by a jazz trio and a trumpeter.

Mixed Emotions is available at CDBaby.com/cd/MaggieMalone

Honor Your Father with an AWON Tribute

An AWON Tribute is a great way to honor and preserve your father's memory. Just write your father's story in 500 to 1,100 words, and submit it and a jpeg image of him in uniform (or the best photo you have), to Nancy Sue Johnson at janceysue@gmail.com.

If you don't know how to start, look at any of the nearly 200 AWON Tributes already posted on the AWON website, such as the one for 2LT Max K. Graham referenced in the article on page 3.

Your AWON Tribute will be posted on the AWON website and preserved for posterity in the AWON database.



SGT William E. Crowley



Connor meets Pearl Harbor veteran at observance



AWONer Roger Connor attended the 75th anniversary commemoration of the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on the flight deck of the USS Midway Museum and Conference Center in San Diego. Several officials from Japan were in attendance. Four Pearl Harbor survivors spoke briefly, as did navy and museum officers. At precisely the time of the attack (9:55 a.m., San Diego time), a wreath was thrown into San Diego Bay as the mournful Taps was played in honor of the more than 2,000 who were killed on the "date which will live in infamy." Roger had the honor of speaking briefly with Woodrow Wilson Darby, 98, pictured left, who was serving on the USS Nevada during the attack. After the ceremony, observers trooped down to the hangar deck where, on a giant screen, they viewed a live feed of the memorial activities aboard the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. For the first time, representatives of Japan were present and recognized from the podium. Later, Roger encountered a school group of Japanese teenagers. Greetings were exchanged and photos taken.

AWON Board Business
27 September 2016

2016 AWON Conference: Conference co-chair **Sam Tannenbaum** sent a full report prior to the board meeting. All tasks have been completed and an estimated \$4,000 - \$5,000 surplus will be donated to AWON.

Financial Report: As of August 31, AWON has \$81,700 cash, including \$13,600 restricted for Memorial Day wreaths. AWON has received \$12,200 of operating income, and has incurred operating expenses of \$9,400.

ABMC Floral Policy: The board received an email in September, undersigned by 13 members, requesting funds be appropriated to assist **Bob Holliday** in his quest to request the American Battle Monuments Commission reinstate its former floral policy. After much discussion the board decided not to move forward with this issue. **Norm Burkey** will draft a response to gather further information.

In-Person Board Meeting: Norm Burkey will send an email to directors of proposed dates for the 2017 in-person board meeting.

Next Meeting: The next board meeting will be October 11, 2016.

Bonnie Oates, Secretary

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

AWON Board Business
11 October 2016

2016 AWON Conference: Conference co-chair **Paul Bremer** reported the committee is well ahead of schedule with 80 attendees. The conference booklet will be going to the printer. Revenue is almost \$6,400 with expenses to-date at \$3,900. There will be some additional expenses, but everything is going smoothly. Paul thanked **Gerry Morenski** and **Kathy Le Comte** for their help and great job. Paul will be sending updated expenses to **Jerry Pinkerton** when he gets the printer's invoice.

Financial Report: As of September 30 AWON has \$81,300 in cash, including \$13,600 that is restricted for Memorial Day wreaths. As of December 31, 2015 AWON had \$77,600 cash, including \$12,200 restricted for wreaths. Year-to-date, AWON has received \$12,600 or 91% of budgeted operating income, and incurred \$10,200 or 51% of budgeted operating expenses.

Meeting Schedule: The board meeting schedule for remaining 2016 and 2017 was submitted. The board will continue to hold meetings the third Tuesday of every month.

Action Items: The board continues to work on several items of business, including revising the membership American WWII Orphans Network

***Thanks for being an
AWON sleuth!***

Our members are great at finding "new" WWII orphans. When you find someone, please let AWON know so we can send them an information packet or note them and their father in our database. An address, email or phone number also would be helpful.



form to reflect new multiple-year membership choices, donating the AWON Father Posters to the American Battle Monuments Commission, finding a future home for the AWON Archives, writing an article for the Korean War Orphans newsletter with the interest of AWON collaborating with other organizations, and the downsizing of AWON.

In-Person Board Meeting: Norm Burkey will email the board a list of dates in March 2017 for the board's in-person board meeting. The board agreed to meet in Indianapolis with a meeting Friday afternoon and all-day Saturday.

AWON Gala: The board agreed that planning for a 2018 gala event needs to start immediately. Diane Pollard and Billie Meeks will contact Penny LeGrand to see if she would serve on the Gala Committee and to seek her advice. Diane already has received information from Armed Forces Reunion, Inc.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the AWON board will be at November 15, 2016.

Billie M. Meeks, Acting Secretary

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

AWON Board Business 15 November 2016

Membership Dues: The board agreed to eliminate the 5-year option for membership. The new form will state an option of one, two or three-year choices.

In-Person Board Meeting: The in-person board meeting was set for March 24-26 in Indianapolis. Norm Burkey will contact Walt Linne regarding the use of the American Legion facilities.

2016 AWON Conference: Norm gave a brief report on the conference. Much discussion was given to the downsizing of AWON and the celebration in 2018. Marvel Joyce and Paul Bremer volunteered for wherever they could be used.

Financial Report: As of October 31 AWON had \$82,000 cash, including \$13,700 restricted for Memorial Day wreaths. Year-to-date AWON has received \$13,700 of operating income and incurred operating expenses of \$10,800. Reimbursements for wreaths purchased totals \$2,852. Year-to-date dues receipts were \$12,800 and received \$475 of interest income.

Action Items: The membership/renewal form has been updated. Gerry Morenski compiled Father Tributes from the AWON website and database to include with the AWON Father posters. Penny LeGrand is reviewing information about the 2018 AWON celebration. Norm Burkey will write an article for the Korean War Orphans newsletter with an interest of AWON collaborating with other organizations. Norma Nicol Hamilton will contact the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in Chicago about their archives policy and will write an article for *The Star* about members' personal memorabilia and archives. Jerry Pinkerton will contact Rik Peirson about what might be archived from the AWON website.

AWON Officers and Directors: The board approved keeping the present slate of officers for 2016-2018. The three continuing members of the board elected to fill the six vacancies on the board with the six previous members elected to the board.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be December 20, 2016.

Bonnie Oates, 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, RTE, 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) 414-1400 (cell)
johnkath5@comcast.net

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

Events at nat'l memorial mark four years of WWII

A four-year-long observance of World War II is underway.

The Friends of the National WWII Memorial embarked on the ambitious commemoration schedule December 7, 2016, with a 75th anniversary observance of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Observances of more than 60 major battles and historic moments will continue to September 2, 2020, all honoring the heroic men and women of the Greatest Generation.

"As time marches on, and as we lose our treasured heroes of the World War II generation, it is ever more critical that we do everything we can now to remember, recognize, and honor the service and sacrifices of these men and women who advanced the cause of freedom for the world," stated Holly Rotondi, Friends executive director.

Events already held at the memorial in Washington, D.C., in 2017 included the 75th anniversaries of the Battle of Bataan and the Battle of the Atlantic. Coming up next are the Doolittle Raid (April 18), Battle of the Coral Sea (May 4), V-E Day Observance (May 8), and Memorial Day (May 29).

In addition to these activities, Friends will continue their efforts to fulfill a congressional mandate, the World War II Memorial Prayer Act of 2013

(Public Law 113-123), adding President Roosevelt's D-Day Prayer to the memorial site. Friends has engaged the original memorial landscape architect team and, working with the National Park Service, has secured the necessary federal approvals for the site placement and initial design concept for this new addition to the memorial.

The memorial was busy in 2016 as well. It hosted commemorative events on V-E Day, Memorial Day, D-Day, V-J Day, and Veterans Day. It also hosted its first annual Friends of the World War II Memorial Teachers Conference, featuring presentations by educators and World War II historians; three tours of sites of WWII significance; and a panel discussion featuring four World War II veterans about their experiences and stories from World War II.

Additionally, Friends hosted concerts by military bands at the memorial throughout the spring and summer months, and profiled hundreds of World War II veterans on their Facebook page.

All presentations are available for viewing on the website <http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org/>. A complete calendar of 75th anniversary events also is posted on the website.

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

Information about You

(please print clearly)

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone _____ (home, work, cell)
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

Be as complete as possible. If you do not have some information, leave it blank and we may be able to find it. Do not delay mailing 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 or service: (rank, medals, etc. Add additional sheet, if necessary.)

Home Town and State _____
Wife's Maiden Name _____

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

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

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 and Donation Options

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

	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year
Basic	\$25	\$48	\$70
Sponsor	\$50	\$96	\$140
Gold Star	\$100	\$192	\$280

Would you like to include a donation for:

AWON Memorial Day Wreath Fund? \$ _____

AWON General Fund? \$ _____

Total Dues and Donations 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.

**Make check payable to AWON and
mail it and form to:**

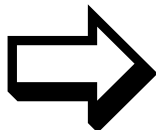
Jerry Pinkerton
AWON Treasurer
2848 Woodside St. #401
Dallas, TX 75204

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1004 Williams Blvd.
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The Star

"Breaking Down the Wall of Silence"

AWON Headquarters
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
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 dbmanager@awondb.org

Archives

Ann Whelan O'Connor awolaojr@earthlink.net

Norma Nicol Hamilton rlhnnh@comcast.net

Bookstore

Walt Linne bookstore@awon.org

Dues

Jerry Pinkerton jerry.pinkerton@sbcglobal.net

First Inquiry Coordinators

Patty Temte AWON@awon.org

Janice Ott Buterbaugh janicebuterbaugh@gmail.com

ListServ

Judy Hathaway judy0305@yahoo.com

Judy Geis Hoffman jghoffman@satx.rr.com

Memorial Day Wreath Project

Sharon Connor sharonconnor@gmail.com

Regional Gatherings Project

Barry Barr-Finch barrfinch1@gmail.com

The Star

Kathy Le Comte johnkath5@comcast.net

Washington, D.C. Liaison

Lee Mathis jlee123@verizon.net

Website

Rik Peirson rikp@dayone.com