

The



Star

Issue 74

"We Speak Their Names"

October 2014

Search for father started only two years ago

Blood transfusion reveals family secret



by Doug Graff Comella

How did a farm boy from Cambridge, Nebraska, meet my mom in Oakland, California, and in the process - create me?"

This is the first sentence of my tribute to my dad, S1c Kenneth E. Graff, which can be viewed in the *Our Fathers* section of the AWON website. My journey down this path started in November 2012. That was when I discovered that the person I had been calling Dad all these years was not my biological father. This was one month before my 70th birthday.

This discovery took place over Thanksgiving weekend. My step-father was in the hospital and the attending physician ordered a transfusion prior to his discharge. The label on the unit of blood was O Positive. I am AB Positive. Those familiar with the ABO blood typing system are aware that a child with Type AB blood cannot have a parent who is Type O.

My first reaction to the realization that he was not my biological father was one of surprise. What a way to learn of this! There is pain, resentment, anger flowing through me. Some of this was eased by attending the 2014 AWON Conference in Seattle, but it may take years to completely go away.

When informed that he could not be my father, my step-father told me that I was his.

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New Board of Directors elected

The AWON Ballot Committee met August 19 to tally the ballots for the 2014 AWON Board of Directors election. The committee consisted of Patty and Jerry Temte and Judy Pinkerton.

A total of 246 ballots were postmarked on or before the deadline of August 1 and were counted. Ballots postmarked after August 1 were discarded.

There were five positions open and six candidates. The results are as follows:

Ron Burrus	148
Billie Meeks	176

Jerry Pinkerton	198
Mike Forgy	223
Bonnie Oates	202
Diane Pollard	196

The new board of directors was installed at the 2014 AWON National Conference in Seattle. The board consists of officers Norm Burkey, president; Gerry Morenski, vice president; Bonnie Oates, secretary; and Jerry Pinkerton, treasurer; Mike Forgy, Norma Nicol Hamilton, Billie Meeks, Ed Peters and Diane Pollard.

The next board election will be in 2016.



AWON FOUNDER

Ann Bennett Mix

AWON OFFICERS

President

Norm Burkey

Vice President

Gerry Conway Morenski

Secretary

Bonnie Oates

Treasurer

Jerry Pinkerton

AWON DIRECTORS

Mike Forgy

Norma Nicol Hamilton

Billie Meeks

Ed Peters

Diane Pollard

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

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Issue #74 1M (10-14)

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, print your email on the check, or attach a note with the email address.

And, please print it clearly.

Also, 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
dbmanager@awondb.org

Conservator offers personal insights

Cropley story elicits large response

by Kathy Le Comte, editor

During my seven years as editor of *The Star* I have never received a larger response to an article than I did for the July feature story about George Cropley.

Cropley is a World War II orphan who was taken advantage of by many individuals for many years until First Lt. Peter Duston (ret.), became his conservator. Lt. Duston has improved George's life in many ways, most notably accompanying George to Rome to visit his father's grave.

Many readers were touched by the Cropley-Duston narrative and asked for more information about Lt. Duston himself - George's Guardian Angel, literally and figuratively. Lt. Duston shied away from the compliment, but provided the following personal insights. After reading this, I think readers will be touched a second time by the Cropley story:

Dear Kathy,

Thanks for the comments, but it's really about George. George is a good guy and deserves to have good things in his life - as we all do. It bothers me that the most vulnerable among us are often taken advantage of.

I am a historian and love a mystery and I have a faith. George's role in my life has blessed me with a wonderful mystery that took us to Rome and

back, Washington, D.C., and back, and as you know, some amazing coincidences, although I prefer to call them God-incidences. I believe that we are much more connected in this world than we usually think. George's story is proof of that. In my life, I have been blessed with others.

You do a wonderful job with The Star.

I read every issue and have been inspired when a long-lost MIA is reunited with the family.

I wait for SFC Gerry Scott, MIA in North Korea, 1952, to be returned home. He was my substitute trumpet teacher who taught me to play Taps when I was 12 so I could become my boy scout troop's bugler. I am still bugling and am (Maine) state director for Bugles

Across America, an organization dedicated to playing live Taps at veteran's funerals or other patriotic events. I often think of Gerry as I play those sad and solemn 24 notes at funerals across Maine.

I am at a boy scout camp as a counselor right now and play Taps every night in the dark up the mountain where we are camped. I often say a prayer for those who gave their all and sometimes for those we are still waiting to return home! I am a story teller and share stories like George's around the campfire to remind my young scouts that Freedom is Not Free.



George Cropley, left, and his conservator, First Lt. Peter Duston, USA (ret.), right. (Images from cher-ryfieldlegion.org)

Mission continues despite political setbacks **JPAC training anthropologists**

by Dr. Robert Mann, Director, FSA

In 2008, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command's Central Identification Laboratory opened the doors of the Forensic Science Academy (FSA) to its first class of Fellows.

The FSA is the only training facility of its kind in the United States. Located on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, it is now in its seventh year of operation. The FSA is an advanced and highly competitive program taught under the auspices of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command Central Identification Laboratory (JPAC CIL). The FSA not only serves as the scientific training and recruiting arm of the JPAC, but as the facility that provides annual and "in-house" training to the CIL staff.

The goal of the FSA is to provide specialized training to a select group of six advanced doctoral students each fall, primarily anthropologists from diverse university programs across the country, with an in-depth knowledge and hands-on experience in forensic anthropology, archaeology, and the human skeleton. Fellows, as they are known, are also given the opportunity to work in an accredited skeletal laboratory and a military environment where leadership and being a team player are critical to the success of the JPAC mission. This unique combination of skills, experiences and specialized training provided by the FSA are intended to enhance Fellows' anthropological and professional skills.

The four-month curriculum focuses on a variety of topics in anthropology related to forensic science. Participants in the FSA develop or enhance their skills in the recon-



2014 FSA Fellows

struction and identification of both highly fragmented and complete human skeletons, terrestrial and underwater archaeological methods, Geographic Information System, remote sensing such as ground penetrating radar, recovery scene processing, DNA extraction from bones and teeth, laboratory quality assurance, and American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board-International Standards Organization accreditation.

Fellows also receive specialized training on how to formulate a biological profile that includes age at death, ancestry, sex, stature, trauma, and identity. Each student is provided training in thin-sectioning bone for histological examination, cause and manner of death, metric and non-metric skeletal analysis, radiology, human skeletal variation, forensic photography, standard operating procedures, and professional ethics. Since opening its doors in 2008, the FSA has trained 32 Fellows.

Fellows also receive hands-on training as members of a military search and recovery team on an actual mission to Laos or Viet-

American WWII Orphans Network

JPAC: The End of WWII Recoveries?

by Patricia Gaffney-Kindig, AWON President Emerita

As you may be aware, JPAC has been in the news recently following an internal struggle and investigation that went all the way to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel who made a decision for reorganization. The media covered the issue but it was a one-sided view. The people at JPAC were told not to talk to the media, that they would be represented by the Department of Defense. Silence, complete silence. Mainstream media, ProPublica and other outlets raved on about JPAC but they were gagged. For those who have made up their minds, consider that you have heard only one side of the issue. And consider this: the result of the reorganization is that recoveries of WWII MIAs may come to an end.

Many of you may remember Justin Taylan (www.pacificwrecks.com) who attended the AWON conference in San Diego and recorded our activities. In January he was contracted by JPAC and left for Papua New Guinea to organize Papuans to locate wrecks of World War II aircraft. They, after all, know the terrain and, as in my father's case, know where wrecks can be found. Prior to PNG's independence in 1975, there was a network of outposts in the mountains manned by kiaps where villagers often reported wrecks. This is in response to an ongoing investigation into JPAC's operations, including the number of cases that are solved annually. JPAC has never been mandated to search for wrecks but has contracted Justin and others in an attempt to reach the impossible goal Congress has set.

I was asked to invite a representative from JPAC to present at the AWON conference in Seattle. I contacted Dr. Robert Mann, who has attended past conferences, but he was unable to attend as it conflicted with the beginning of the new semester of the FSA. He kindly agreed to submit the following about the FSA, a new facility that is separate from JPAC.

Recently I attended a neighborhood event where "John the DJ" was broadcasting worldwide on American Veterans Radio. His program was a tribute to John Denver. I mentioned to someone that my late husband, Michael Kindig, was an actor who had performed in a movie called *The Christmas Gift* with Denver. The DJ invited me to do an on-air interview. I didn't have much to say about the movie but took the opportunity to talk about some other things. I thanked the listeners for their service; told the story of my journey to Papua New Guinea and the search, discovery and repatriation of my father and that of Michael's father. I spoke about JPAC and AWON and gave the websites. Responses from around the world streamed in on the DJ's laptop.

nam, where they assist in the archaeological excavation of wartime aircraft crash sites or burials. They are also provided the unique opportunity to examine skeletal remains at Khon Kaen University, Thailand, where they hone their skills in human skeletal variation, ancestry, bone disease, trauma, and innovative methods of identification.

The importance of providing structured training at the JPAC for FSA Fellows from

different universities in the United States is that it serves to disseminate basic scientific standards to potential new employees, as well as helps ensure success at all levels, whether in the laboratory or the field. The FSA is not only a top rated training facility, but is a vital element of the future of forensic science and the continued efforts to recover, identify and bring home America's missing heroes.

Memorial Day 2014

The seven overseas American military cemeteries represented below and right were not received in time for the July issue of *The Star*. Please visit the AWON website for more information and photographs of the events at all cemeteries at www.awon.org/new/memorials.html.



Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Sharon Crowley Connor • AWON Overseas Coordinator – AWON Normandy Ambassador Jean-Marc Lesueur • Presenters – Jean-Marc Lesueur and AWONer Charlene Czajowski.



Epinal American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Dave Colinan • Presenter – AWON Epinal Ambassador and Retired Cemetery Superintendent Roland Prieur. Also present were AWONer Merrill Baker and AWON Overseas Friend Jerome Leclerc.



Rhone American Cemetery and Memorial, France

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



Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial, Belgium

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Rik Peirson • AWON Overseas Coordinators – AWON Belgian Ambassadors Regine and Bernard Achten • Presenters AWONer Judi Hollis Kramer and daughter Melissa Beard. Also present were Regine and her daughter, Marie (pictured). The Achtens founded the AWON Memorial Day Wreath Project.





North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial, Tunisia

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Diane Marnette Sagen • Overseas Coordinator – Staff • Presenter – Guest of Honor, Rear Admiral Jeffrey A. Lemmons, Director, Inter-American Defense College



AWON helps man find daughter of soldier in letter

Mike Ferguson of Pennsylvania contacted AWON recently for help finding a woman named Joyce. She was the daughter of Ferguson's father's war buddy, who was KIA on Guadalcanal in 1942. Mike's father passed away in 2006. Mike recently found the letter and a newspaper clipping in his father's war memorabilia, and wanted to give them to Joyce. The letter, written neither by or to the elder Ferguson, explained how the soldier was killed and how the writer wanted what he called "the impossible" - to keep the news about the death away from the soldier's wife, who was due to give birth. According to the newspaper clipping Joyce was born three weeks after the letter was written.

AWON did some research and was able to find Joyce. And as it turns out, she lives a mere 14 miles from Mike. He called her and described the contents of the letter.

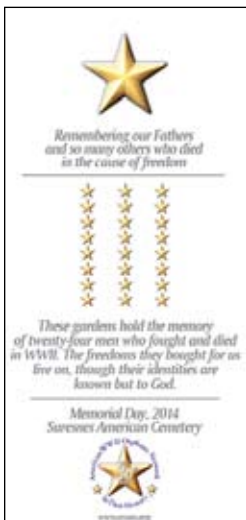
"The emotion in the two-page letter cannot be described," he stated. "As we spoke she said she had tears in her eyes."

Mike and Joyce discovered that their parents went to high school together, which finally explained the connection. Mike drove to Joyce's house the next morning to present her the letter and newspaper clipping.

"I was happy to meet Joyce and give to her something that I know will have great meaning," Mike explained. "My only regret was her mother, who passed away in 2012, did not get to read the letter."

Mike found AWON through the Friends of the National WWII Memorial. AWON and the *Friends* are developing a stronger relationship as both organizations have common interests and are exploring sharing information.

In appreciation of the assistance AWON provided him, Mike said he would send a donation to AWON.



Suresnes American Cemetery and Memorial, France

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



Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial, France

AWON Stateside Coordinator – Brian Hope • Presenter – AWON Overseas Friend Jacky Emery

Understanding WWII eases feelings of loss

Author's note: This is a condensed version of the talk AWONer Walter Carter gave at the 2014 AWON National Conference in Seattle. A full copy of his text is available by emailing walterfcarter@aol.com. The ideas herein presented are the tentative thoughts of an amateur historian, not an expert reporting on a professional consensus. Readers' comments are welcome.

by Walter C. Carter

We are members of AWON because we lost our fathers in World War II. At our biennial conferences over the past 20 years, we have focused a lot on ourselves and our fathers, but relatively little on World War II itself. I suggest that the fact that the war itself was the event in which our loss occurred shapes our grief, and that a greater familiarity with the history and historical setting of the war might help in our healing from that grief.

Let's consider a simplified description of what a hypothetical "Average American" in the 1940s and 1950s thought what World War II was all about. In this image, America was the innocently aggrieved country, unjustifiably attacked by the irredeemable bad guys of the Axis who would have ruled the world tyrannically and brutally. Americans were the strong, brave, selfless, competent good guys who fought honorably and beat the bad guys almost single-handedly, then generously rehabilitated its former enemies and built a new world order of freedom, peace, and prosperity. If our fathers died in such a noble cause with such a successful outcome as this, then perhaps we can find some solace and feel some pride in our fathers, even if the world doesn't sufficiently appreciate the War's impact on American widows and their orphans.

Over the past 70 years, this simplified

view of the war has been criticized, modified, and made more complex. The war's roots are seen extending much further back into the past, and include policy blunders on the part of the Allies. The competence and morality of the Allies' conduct are seen as more ambiguous, the war's legacy is seen as more mixed, and the losses of Americans and their war orphans are seen as a very small fraction of the war's total damage and casualties around the world.

The war's deeper roots include the Great Depression and the autarkic economic policies of the Allies; the failure of the democracies to resist the aggressions of the tyrannies during the 1930s; faulty treaties imposed by the victors in World War I; the failure of the United States to join the League of Nations; the provocative irritants in U.S. policies, from the mid-19th century on, regarding Japan; post-1815 competition among states to replace monarchy with democracy, fascism, or communism; continuation of 19th century efforts of recently unified states (Germany, Italy, Japan) to take their place in a modern world that was largely divided up among existing colonial powers.

U.S. military conduct was not free of blunders (e.g. underestimating the Japanese, delayed adoption of convoy system in the Atlantic, Battle of the Bulge) or atrocities (e.g. killing prisoners and civilians, excessive bombing of cities). The United States had its own problems of racism and anti-Semitism. The United States and United Kingdom allied themselves with one murderous totali-



Walter C. Carter

Welcome New Members

Elaine Gherardi, CA, niece of CAPT Glen T. Maltby, AAF
Peter Dossing, TX, son of TECH5 Elmer R. Musil, Army
Patricia Westbrook Rutledge, AZ, dau of 2LT Hubert M. Westbrook, AAF
Marilynn Rustand Lieurance, OR, dau of 1LT Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand, AAF
Steven Hayne, MS, son of CAPT Thomas F. Hoyne, Army
Jan Stocklinski, NC, family friend of 1LT Paul D. Meyer, Army
Frank Dawson, AL, nephew of PVT Robert D. Watts, Army
Betty Birdwell, GA, niece of S/SGT Sidney S. Beck, Army
Sarah Howard, GA, niece of S/SGT Sidney S. Beck, Army
Roberta Nolan, PA, dau of 1LT James O. Lyons, Army
Carol De Cesare Messeri, NY, dau of PFC Thomas A. De Cesare, Army
Kathleen Broome Williams, CA, dau of MAJ Roger G.B. Broome, Marines
Daniel Weber Conroy, MI, son of PVT Ralph E. Weber, Army

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

tarian regime (U.S.S.R.) to defeat others (the Axis powers), then allied with convicted and pardoned war criminals to defeat the former ally in a Cold War. The United Nations and other organizations of the new world order didn't prevent wars of national liberation and other hot wars. Most of the World War II's combat, deaths, and destruction occurred in the U.S.S.R., China, Eastern Europe, Germany, and Japan. Estimates of total casualties usually exclude the wives and children of veterans who returned from the war with PTSD or other physical or psychological wounds.

But even if many of these "revisions" are largely accepted, the bottom line seems to be that America and its armed forces acquitted themselves well, the behavior of the Axis powers was much worse, and the world is a much better place than it would have been had we not fought and helped defeat the Fascism, Nazism, and militant Imperialism of the time. It may have been a "necessary" war, if not a "good" one.

The history of World War II might serve as a kind of "linking object," which, as Vamik Volkan has taught us, is an object or image that connects a mourner in a comforting way with a deceased loved one, and which can help us accept his or her death and construct a new life without his or her physical presence. If we see our country and our father as having performed well, with a mixture of morality and competence, in the major watershed event of the 20th century, and if we put our pain as orphans in perspective amongst the losses of others, it may soften the sharp edges of our grief and help us continue building our own lives.

As for the meaning of World War II, I will recall that when communist China's Zhou En-Lai was asked in the mid-20th century, "What is the meaning of the French Revolution," he replied, "It's too soon to tell." Perhaps we should continue to have an educational component on World War II in future AWON conferences, and make the history of World War II one of our shared linking objects.

Seattle Roundtable Discussion

One of the sessions at the Seattle conference was a roundtable discussion about how AWON should focus its efforts and resources in the future. Each table had an AWON board director to facilitate the discussion. Three questions were presented during the one-

hour session, followed by open discussion if time allowed. The director copied responses on an over-sized notepad for all to see. Responses were collated and appear below. The responses are not in order of importance. Some responses appeared more than once.

Question 1: Should we continue to have conferences every two years?

- Continue conferences, but scale down, evaluate the need every two years
- Need more free time
- Need larger area to gather
- Less planned activities
- 5-day length is okay, especially for people who travel distance
- Smaller program book, want roster
- Post roster and program on website so that it can be printed, or email to attendees to save money
- Hire conference planners so that we do not need volunteers
- Focus location in middle of country
- Regional gatherings in off-conference years (west, middle, east coast)
 - o Stipend to assist with costs
 - o Formalize regional gatherings and mandate gathering in off year
 - o Get number of members in each region to see where the best bang for the buck would be in a regional gathering
- Use website to list those interested in hosting a regional gathering
- Don't build conference around an event (e.g. Memorial Day)
- Change "conference" to "reunion," more of a social gathering
- Value the relationships that we have formed
- Have less-structured conferences
- Centralize location of conferences
- Every 1½ years
- Review demographics, where are we from?
- Less formal, more social time

- Regional coordinators need to do their job
- Future group travel, a cruise or cemetery tours
- AWON is not as important to grandchildren as it has been to us
- Include war orphans from other wars
- Keep AWON going until interest is no longer there, even if attendance declines
- Questionnaire to membership to learn their willingness to volunteer
- 10-year plan is needed, two years at a time
- Poll members through Star, website, and ListServ
- AWON pilgrimage trips, use travel company to design and manage, visit European cemeteries and others
- Keep doing what we are doing
- Have sessions with like interests: Normandy kids, MIA kids, buried in the USA kids, Margraten kids

Question 2: We communicate through the ListServ, The Star and the website. Do you have suggestions on other methods of communication?

ListServ

- ListServ is outdated, overwhelming or redundant
- Don't use and don't care
- Should have more information

e-Star

- Quarterly okay, prefer paper
- Every two months, shorter version would keep news more current and less paper to print

The Star

- Letters to editor page
- Smaller and more often, then communication would be more timely

Website

- Who owns the AWON website?
- Needs updating
- Don't use it
- Website is hard to navigate
- Why do we need a password? I keep losing it
- Archaic website, can't use it
- Website manager should send quarterly communication to membership about website updates, publish on Listserv and in *The Star*
- Only visit for conference info and for *Father Tributes*
- Need more visibility to *Father Tributes*, button is at bottom of the screen, not in a prominent place
- Useful, essential for AWON information
- Need archive of all newsletters
- Is website backed up?
- Spend money on website, it would benefit everyone

Facebook

- Could be good advertising for AWON
- Should have a link to our website
- Concerns about privacy
- Means of finding new members
- Advertise regional gatherings
- Don't want Facebook
- 50/50 in favor of website

Communication

- To former members by telephone, it's more personal
- Standardize due date renewals (e.g. January)

Board of Directors

- Continuity on board, 2-year terms

Question 3: There is about \$75,000 in undesignated funds in the treasury. How should funds be allocated in the future?

- Increase dues
- Have separate line item in budget for people to donate to cover other folk's dues
- Structure dues to all be due at the same time
- If AWON dissolves, treasury should be donated to cemeteries
- Use AWON funds to preserve AWON archives, i.e if we give AWON archives to a repository, stipulate that AWON funds are to be used for archival preservation
- Pay part-time administrator at Indy office to be the focal point for all AWON business (database, *The Star*, communications)
- Hire event planner for conferences
- I have stopped donating as much as I did when I joined. If I know that this organization will live I will reconsider donating more
- Whatever happened to donating air miles so that orphans could use them to help defray airline costs to conferences and cemetery visits?
- Donate to *Wounded Warriors*, veterans homes, organizations, *Honor Flights*
- Commission monument to war orphans
- Use AWON funds to record our stories (oral history to become part of our archives).
- Pay postage for regional coordinators
- More financial transparency needed
- Use money to archive AWON history
- Fundraising
- How much money is needed to pay *The Star* editor and database manager in the future?

Bonus Discussion:

- Archives: send memorabilia to WWII Museum/Archives
- Have legacy members: grandchildren





How does this thing work?
MC Sam Tannenbaum with
the school bell that kept ev-
eryone, mostly, on sched-
ule - and behaving.



The main meeting room



Israel and Sue Shotridge, per-
forming a Northwest Coast Na-
tive American welcome

**Selected scenes
from the
2014 AWON National
Conference in Seattle**

**Visit the
AWON website for
more photos**



Speakers Walter Carter, Joe Lippi, Art Mahler and Kathleen Williams

The Navy Band Northwest Brass Quintet and Walt Linne at the Memorial Service



The Hospitality Room, and tour of the *Museum of Flight*

Some of the mothers panelists, with moderator Dr. Vamik Volkan





Chickie Shields Berry (with husband Bob), and
Lorin McCleary - 2014 recipients of the
Col. Jack O. Forgy Distinguished Service Award



Mixing it up at the social hour
before the banquet





Judi Hollis Kramer (with daughter Melissa), and Barry Barr-Finch - Seattle Conference Co-Chairs at the Thursday night reception, with music provided by the Mountlake Terrace High School Jazz Combo, in background

My husband, Don, and I spent the first two days at the convention in Seattle... We were both amazed at how friendly everybody was - not just a couple of people but everybody! ... I have never in my life met a friendlier group of people. Also, we found people genuinely interested in the research I have done with regard to my dad and each member of his crew. We came away from the convention wishing we could have stayed longer. Many thanks to all those who worked behind the scenes to put this convention together. Also, thanks to each member of AWON who attended the convention and took time to say hello and give a hug. What a wonder group of people, and I'm proud to now be part of AWON. - Marilyn



Banquet and Memorial Service Chaplain Steve Wilkins, and the Missing Man Table

His failure that November day to acknowledge that he is not my father has generated a separation that continues to this day.

During the following few weeks, my daughter contacted him by phone and letter several times, but never did the truth emerge. Nobody on my mom's side nor my step-father's family ever whispered a hint that he was not my real dad. Perhaps they thought it was his and my mom's responsibility to tell me the truth. My step-father has a half-brother who knew the complete story, but as mentioned above, he did not feel it was his responsibility to tell me. It took three phone calls by my daughter to convince him to at least give me a general idea of what had taken place in 1942.

And here follows a detailed description of my quest for any and all information about my dad. A significant disadvantage to learning all of this at age 70 is that just about anyone who would have information is no longer alive. My mom died in 1985 without ever telling me anything, even though she knew her days were numbered as the cancer was taking its toll on her body and mind.

My mom has one surviving sister who was 12 years old when I was born. In early 2013 I visited my aunt who was, and still is, in a nursing home. I asked her if she remembers anyone that my mom was going out with during 1941-42. Initially, she was not able to recall a name.

Shortly after returning home that day, she called and gave me the name Kenny Graff and told me that he had died at Pearl Harbor. As I was conceived in March 1942, this could not be true. I later learned my dad was on the *USS Oklahoma* in Pearl Harbor that fateful day of December 7, 1941. He survived this attack and was transferred to the *USS Helena* in late December 1941. But my aunt's information did allow me to take the first steps to learn who my father is. I now had a name to work with.

In February 2013 my daughter suggested that I investigate my baptismal certificate as certain parts and dates seemed suspicious.

This has been in my possession since my wife and I were married in 1968. The discrepancies never made me wonder what and why, other than those were the war years and things might have been different then. I had to visit the church where my baptism took place in person to learn the true facts. Book 6, page 400 of the baptismal registry states:

Name: Douglas Clinton John Graff

Date of birth: December 22, 1942

Date of baptism: December 31, 1944

*Father: Kenneth Eugene Graff,
residence Nebraska*

Mother: Virginia Marie Medaglia

In the margin are two notations. The first states, "Child does not know of illegitimate birth." The second, "Child adopted in 1947 by Samuel Comella and shall carry this name forward." My baptismal certificate is signed by the pastor and dated February 18, 1948.

One thought that did cross my mind was that my mom simply pulled a name out of a hat. But I do not think that she would have lied to a priest.

Now that I had my dad's name, the intense phase of my research began. My resources were the San Bruno National Archives, Ancestry.com, Fold3.com, and the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC).

In the National Archives online database, there is a list of World War II deaths by state. My dad's name did not appear in the Nebraska records but did show up in Kansas. His mother's name was Floy Childs. This rang a major-sized bell.

During the war years, my mom's brother was in the U.S. Army, and at the age of 50 my mom's father joined the U.S. Navy - sometime in 1943. The household consisted of my mom, her two sisters, her mom, and me. My grandmother was taking care of me while my two aunts were attending school and my mom was working at Montgomery Ward.

When I was three or four years old, a woman came to visit the house where my grand-

parents, mom, and her sisters were living. They asked me to call her Grandma Childs. This has remained in my memory all these years.

My mom and Grandma Childs may have written to each other up until the time I finished elementary school, but this borders on speculation. In the fifth grade, I chose Kansas as my state to do a report on and the only reason that I can think of choosing Kansas is because this is where Grandma Childs lived.

One of the sad things for Grandma Childs is that I was her only grandchild. Her daughter, my Aunt Elaine, never had any children, and neither of them saw me after the visit that most likely would have taken place in 1945 or 1946.

My next step was to contact the NPRC requesting my dad's records. My only supporting document was the baptismal registry, and my reason for the request was *possible biological father*.

Within a few weeks, 50-55 pages of documents arrived. These pages contained enough information to learn that my dad went to Cambridge High School in Cambridge, Nebraska. He was there, as best I can determine, for only his senior year. He was in the Civilian Conservation Corps for one year. He enlisted in Hastings, Nebraska, and did his basic training at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. He was assigned to the *USS Oklahoma* following his graduation from basic training in October 1940. There are no documents stating what his job on the ship was.

Other documents provided me with Grandma Childs' address. She had moved to Belleville, Kansas, following my grandfather Harry August Graff's death in 1940. Within

these pages is how I learned of my dad's sister, Elaine.

The staff of Cambridge High School sent me the first picture that I ever had of my dad, something precious as gold to me, for I was beginning to think that I would never know what he looked like. This picture is in the 1939 *Cambraskan*.

Aunt Elaine died in 1997 and in her obituary she requested donations to the Republic County Historical Society in Belleville, Kansas. A wonderful woman at this mu-

seum sent me two photos of my dad in uniform. One of these pictures is included on my AWON *Father Tribute* page.

In June 2014, I visited both Cambridge and Belleville, hoping to pick up any detail about my dad and his family, no matter how small. My Aunt Elaine had some serious mental issues starting in the early 1990s, but prior to this she donated not only the above photos but also my dad's medals to the museum. Being able to touch them was another unbelievable and precious moment.

During my visit to the museum in Cambridge, I discovered a plaque honoring the World War II dead who had attended Cambridge High School. My dad is one of six men from that small

community who lost their lives during the war.

And now I return to the first sentence of this article. In February or March 2014 I paid another visit to my mom's sister. This time the main question was if she remembered any guys (sailors) coming to the house. She was unclear on this, not surprising as she was just eleven in early 1942. But she did tell me the most likely scenario for how my mom



Doug and his maternal grandfather, Louis Medaglia. In his early 50s, Medaglia enlisted in the SeaBees. He was a cook, landing on Omaha Beach June 9, 1944, during the Normandy invasion.

...continued on page 18

...Comella, from page 17

and dad met. Aunt B. told me that when the war started, my mom and her girlfriends would "go where the sailors were."

I have mentioned that my dad was on the *USS Oklahoma* and then was transferred to the *USS Helena* at Pearl Harbor. The *Helena* had been damaged but underwent sufficient repairs to allow it to sail to Mare Island Navy Yard, next to Vallejo, California.

The *Helena* was there from early January until mid-July 1942. My daughter and I visited Mare Island over the 2014 Memorial Day weekend and were quite surprised by the size of the shipyard. We also wondered how the men could have made it to either Oakland or San Francisco, given that the distance is 20-30 miles from Vallejo.

Late in 2013 I made contact with a 94-year-old man, Joe D., who was on the *Helena* with my dad but does not have any memory of him. During one of our conversations I asked Joe how he got down to Oakland. Joe told me that the easiest way was to hitch hike, as anyone would pick up a sailor and give him a ride. This quite likely is what my dad did. As to precisely how and where my dad and mom met is a matter of conjecture, but my first guess is a USO function or perhaps a church gathering.

The *Helena* left Mare Island for the Los Angeles/San Pedro area in July 1943 and joined a convoy headed for Espiritu Santo. This light cruiser participated in 12 naval engagements, with its final one in the early morning hours of July 6, 1943. The *Helena* was hit by three torpedoes and sank within 20 minutes, with a loss of 168 men.

In April 2013 I sent a letter to Leavenworth National Cemetery asking if my dad could have a memorial marker on U.S. soil even though his name is on the Wall of the Missing at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in the Philippines. The staff granted my request based solely upon the entry in the baptismal registry and a few pages from the NPRC documents.

During the 2013 Memorial Day weekend - the most emotional of my life - I was able

to see, touch, and feel my dad's memorial marker in this beautiful cemetery. We had a conversation, a tearful one. I spoke to my dad...

"You are now close to the home where your mom and sister lived much of their lives. You do not know the pain inside me of never having had the chance to know you, and you me. I hoped you enjoyed the time when the USS Helena was in Sydney for three weeks in March 1943. I treasure your serving our country willingly and paying the ultimate sacrifice for that service."

"Dad, I am thankful for the gracious assistance provided by the libraries, museums, and school in Cambridge and Belleville. Without their help I never would have had a picture of you. Three precious pictures."

"You would be proud of my wife, Cecilia, your grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and we wish that you were here with us. As that is not possible, we look forward to the time when we meet each other for the first time."

In late 2013 I sent out letters to 60-80 men who were in the *USS Helena* organization. These men were on the ship with my dad and I was hoping that one of them could tell me something about him. This did not happen, but one reply came from a caretaker of one of his shipmates who is now 95. While I do have the caretaker's email address, I do not have a name. He, or she, is a member of AWON and wrote that I should check out AWON because "you are one of us." So here I am, among my precious brothers and sisters.

When I began reading the *Father Tributes*, my initial feelings were envy for those of you who either knew your father at an early age or who had been told about him, without the Wall of Silence that many of us have encountered. Over the following months, there was a gradual change in my attitude, and I now feel so happy for those of you who have been told about your father. The jealousy most definitely had disappeared by the time the Seattle conference took place.



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



BOOKS

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

____ *The Lost Submarine: A True Story of Love and War*
by **Nancy Kenney** \$16.00

____ *"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the
Lives of America's Children*
by William M. Tuttle Jr., PhD \$30.00

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

____ *If These Stones Could Talk* **REDUCED!**
by Col. Calvin G. "Jerry" Lyons, USA (Ret) \$20.00

____ *The Dad I Never Knew: A War Orphan's Search for Inner
Healing*
by **Bruce Brodowski** **FREE WHILE COPIES LAST!**

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

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

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

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

____ *Love Always, Ben*
by **Huey Tyra**, nephew **REDUCED!** \$2.00

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

____ *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
hardcover \$35.00 softcover \$24.00

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

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

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

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

____ *For Those Who Love, Time Is Not*
by **Kay Brigham** **REDUCED!** \$16.00

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

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

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



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form



CD / VIDEO

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

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____ **AWON 20th Anniversary Totebag** *\$10.00
* small, P&H included

____ Tote bag (large) \$20.00

____ **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

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____ *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

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Postage and handling: \$8 for each item. Items marked with an asterisk (*) include P&H. For multiple purchases:
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Indianapolis, IN 46216

email: bookstore@awon.org

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

AWON Board Business
18 May 2014

Financial Report: The financial report was submitted by email but Treasurer **Jerry Pinkerton** was not in attendance. No action was taken.

Interim Board President: In an e-mail to the board on April 2, **Norm Burkey** nominated **Ed Peters** to serve as interim board president; seconded by **Gerry Morenski**. The vote was affirmative, and Ed Peters was elected.

2014 Conference Report: Conference Co-Chair **Barry Barr-Finch** provided information on ground transportation from airport to hotel and for those taking the Alaskan cruise. An article on transportation will appear in *The Star*. **Judy Hoffman** suggested putting the same information on the Listserv when it's ready. **Mary Kenney** is reaching out to local Seattle businesses for contributions. She also is inviting **Kathleen Broome Williams**, another war orphan, who has written a book and may become a speaker at the conference.

2014 Election: Norm Burkey listed the six candidates running for board director positions. Their biographies will appear in *The Star*. The candidates are **Bonnie Oates, Mike Forgy, Ron Burrus, Diane Pollard, Jerry Pinkerton, and Billie Meeks**. Database Manager Gerry Morenski announced that there are 539 active members. Following a discussion of who is eligible to vote, Judy Hoffman proposed a change in the bylaws Article IV, Section D, #1, to read, "All Orphan, Family, and Associate Members retaining active status and in good standing are eligible to vote for members to serve on the Board of Directors, to access the members-only section of the AWON website, to request a page of honor for a father or other family member who was killed in the war and to attend local, regional, and national meetings of AWON." The motion was seconded and passed. The ballots

will be mailed out of Springfield. Norm Burkey will write the cover letter. No return envelopes will be provided.

Membership Process: Judy Hoffman and Gerry Morenski completed the revision of the AWON membership process and sent it by e-mail to the board. The revision was accepted.

Website Redesign: Ed Peters reported that the committee has requested a formal proposal from The Support Group but has yet to receive one. Discussion followed on seeking collaboration with Webmaster **Rik Peirson**. **Kathy Le Comte** explained how the server-side computer languages PHP and HTML work together to make website maintenance easier and to reduce the number of web pages that must be maintained.

AWON Archives Advocacy: **Norma Nicol Hamilton** will attend the Society of American Archivists conference in Washington, D.C., in August. She will give a short address to the Military Archivists Roundtable sub-group. She will take AWON brochures and newsletters with her for distribution.

Friends of WWII Memorial: Gerry Morenski reported on her recent trip to Washington, D.C., to meet with Friends of the WWII Memorial. They have initiated discussion with AWON about their WWII database. Morenski stated ABMC and *Friends* may wish to work with AWON in the future to combine all three databases for historical reference. There was special interest in the AWON *Father Tributes*. Morenski will contact AWON Webmaster Rik Peirson to make sure ABMC has a link to AWON on its new website.

Next Board Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the AWON Board of Directors is Sunday, July 20, 2014.

Judy Hathaway, 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
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johnkath5@comcast.net

**Deadline for the
January Issue
is December 1**

AWON Board Business 20 July 2014

Financial Report: Treasurer **Jerry Pinkerton** reported that 70% of budgeted income has been received. Only 19% of budgeted expenses have been incurred to date. So far, no costs for website redesign have been incurred. At the present time, assets total \$87,000.

2014 Conference Report: Conference Co-chair **Judi Hollis Kramer** reported that preparations are progressing smoothly; volunteers are lined up and all speakers are finalized. WWII veteran **Art Mahler** will speak, as will Dr. **Kathleen Broome Williams**, noted naval historian and WWII orphan. Discussion followed.

AWON Tax Preparer: **Bill Chiodo** has retired and therefore has resigned as AWON's tax preparer, a post he has held since 2002. Jerry Pinkerton will contact his nephew who is a CPA about preparing AWON's taxes and report back to the board.

Gold Star Children: Jerry Pinkerton reported that he spoke to the producer of *Gold Star Children*, a documentary about children of servicemen killed during the Vietnam War, sponsored by Sons and Daughters in Touch - Vietnam War orphans association. Discussion followed about possible common areas, such as archives, and where AWON might collaborate.

Roundtable Discussion: The board discussed the parameters and how it will facilitate small discussion groups at the Seattle National Conference about the future direction of AWON. Results of the discussion will be published in *The Star*.

New Director Orientation: Since three new people will be joining the board of directors, the board decided to pair new board members with experienced board members for mentoring.

Margraten Trip: **Gerry Morenski** reported on the 2015 AWON Memorial Day trip to Margraten. The Margraten Grave Adoption Committee has made many plans and arrangements for the AWON group, including a dinner, luncheon, concert, other entertainment, and two buses for five days. More than 60 AWONers and their families are attending, with a waiting list.

AWON Archives Advocacy: Directors **Ed Peters** and **Norm Burkey** will join **Norma Nicol Hamilton** during her presentation to the Military Archivists Roundtable sub-group at the Society of American Archivists conference in Washington, D.C., in August. Norma will present a report at the Seattle conference.

AWON Database: Database Manager **Gerry Morenski** reported that there are currently 574 active members in AWON.

Next Board Meeting: The next regularly scheduled meeting of the AWON Board of Directors is at the 2014 AWON National Conference in Seattle.

Judy Hathaway, 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

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 Who Died

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 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:

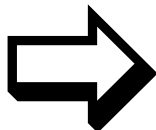
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The Star

"Breaking Down the Wall of Silence"

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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

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