The Long Journey Home

By Janice Crandell Powers

Like so many of my brothers and sisters in AWON, I have been on a journey of discovery throughout much of my life. Some of the places along that long journey were planned, some deliberate. Some were a complete surprise.

I began the journey long before I even knew I was on it, or where it would take me, but life has been good to me, and I finally made it home. When I refer to home, I’m speaking of the place where I now live with the memory and connection to the father I never knew, the father who is now alive to me in ways he never was before. The walls of the home are built of courage, pride, honor, and time. Inside, the rooms are filled with memories, experiences, loss, pain, hope, discovery, connection and more.

It seems like a kind of odyssey to me as I look back at the way the journey progressed, and just like the long-suffering Odysseus in Homer’s Odyssey, it took me many years to discover the things my heart longed for.

As a child, there were some clues along the way, escaping softly and unguarded between the long silences in my family. My first attempt to find my missing father came when I joined my husband in Germany as a young Army wife.

My husband Mike was drafted during the Vietnam War, though his duty in Germany kept him out of combat. A hidden blessing was that our posting put me very close to the cemetery in the Netherlands where my father was buried. I was the first to go and visit Margraten, a road trip with Mike in our unpredictable Opal sedan. I was 24,
President’s Message

by Walt Linne

As the current AWON Board of Directors concludes their two-year term, I want to wholeheartedly thank them for their service and support of AWON's mission. Special thanks to Jean Rhinehart for her recent service as AWON Director, and Paul Bremer for his efforts as AWON Treasurer. Paul will remain on board as an AWON Director.

I would like to welcome our two new AWON Directors, Barbara George and Past AWON VP Robert Meek, Jr. Bob has also assumed the role of AWON Treasurer. Also, I would like to welcome Rondy Elliott, longtime AWON member, Board member, and orphan author, who has become our Friends of the WWII Memorial Liaison. Thank you all very much for stepping up to help AWON. Note: We still have an open position for the Archives.

Entering AWON's 30th year of operation as a WWII orphan organization, the Board's goals remain the same - reaching out to our siblings, educating the world about our experience, and keeping our Fathers' sacrifice alive. To this end, we continue to seek opportunities to work with organizations that honor those who sacrificed their life for our freedom. These include Gold Star Mothers and Children, Wreaths Across América (WAA), Tragedy Assistance Programs for Survivors (TAPS), National Military and Veteran Alliance (NMVA), the American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC), the Friends of the WWII Memorial and the National WWII Museum. And, as our two new Directors have stated as personal goals, encouraging our children - our Father’s grandchildren - to become more involved in AWON.

Alert! Please be advised our national AWON conference scheduled for May 4 thru 8, 2021, will be rescheduled for the Fall of 2021 or for the Spring of 2022 because of the coronavirus. I would like to hear your thoughts, and your opinion as to whether to hold the national conference in New Orleans at the National WWII Museum or another location based on time of year and/or availability of conference site. Please convey your comments to me at wlinne@iupui.edu or president@awon.org or 317-697-4697.

Thanks to all our AWON members for your continued support as we celebrate our 30th anniversary in this coming year 2021!

The Star is a quarterly publication of the American WWII Orphans Network (AWON), a nonprofit 501(c)3, nonpolitical public service organization serving the children of US Servicemen killed in WWII. The Star is published and mailed from Indianapolis, IN. ISSN 1941-370X (print), 1941-3769 (online) Copyright 2020 by the American WWII Orphans Network. All rights reserved. Issue 98 - 1M (4-20)
and the memory of that visit is still a blur. It wasn’t until a visit to England years later that a chance encounter with my father’s history convinced me that I was destined to search for more.

I walked into the chapel in the back of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London that honors the American servicemen who died while stationed in Britain. I had no idea it even existed. There I found his name, recorded and written by hand in a beautiful book that stands in the center of the chapel.

A few days later, while touring a garden in Dover Castle, I had the opportunity to go down under the castle and through a labyrinth of WWII tunnels. At the end of the tunnels, opening out to the English Channel, was the war room where all the air bases in The UK were marked with red dots on a huge table map. One of those red dots was on Shipdham, the air field where my father had been stationed. I had learned that he had been in England, and the name of that base, less than a year before that trip.

It wasn’t until my mother’s passing that I felt the freedom to travel deeper into discovery, and the last few years have led me to AWON, and back to Margraten, where I met the Dutch couple who have adopted my father’s grave there. That visit was a very different experience for me than the first time. I was a different person. Just last autumn I was hosted by another Dutch historian and his family who took me to the place where my father’s plane went down, a quiet little woodland that has remained undisturbed for the past 75 years. There we placed a memorial plaque and flowers, and I planted snowdrops beneath the trees.

I am so blessed to have made this long and beautiful journey, and shared it with so many wonderful people along the way. It could have been otherwise.

Janice Crandell Powers

Daughter of 1st Lt.Leanord J Crandell
Pilot, 8th Air Force, KIA March 24, 1945

Janice Crandell Powers, daughter of 1LT Leonard Crandell, at her father's grave at the Netherlands American Cemetery.

Powers is the orphan author of Pieces of Us, a journey of discovering the lost pieces of two lives, a father and a daughter, losing each other too soon yet finding each other after all. Pieces of Us is available for purchase in the AWON Bookstore, pages 22-23.
Another Year of Remembering, Honoring, and Teaching

AWON is partnering with Wreaths Across America Again!

By Sandra Walker

Their hopes buoyed after seeing the Allies triumphant in several horrific battles, by September 1944 American journalists started writing that troops could be home for Christmas. Soldiers and families were hopeful, not about just "being home for Christmas, if ♫ only in dreams ♪" but actually celebrating the holiday together.

Alongside the exciting headlines, reality existed: many Gold Star families endured an empty place at the dinner table. Into November 1944, the war in the Pacific and in Europe grew even more horrendous. During the Battle of the Bulge, Christmas Day was white.

Rather than any "dreaming", a hideous nightmare ran for hours as fighting raged through bitterly cold, cruel conditions. The season brought remembrances, especially for grieving children, wives, mothers, brothers and sisters. From both theaters of war, more telegrams were delivered well into the summer of 1945.

Today, remembrances from that profoundly sad, silent era will be beautifully expressed. This December 19, Wreaths Across America will orchestrate the placement of tens of thousands of wreaths across Arlington National Cemetery, and in 2,100 additional locations. WAA's iconic fresh evergreen wreath with a bright red bow placed against a snowy-white background spreads a heartfelt expression honoring selfless service to the United States and to the world.

Wreaths Across America (WAA) began in 1992 because of Mr. Morrill Worcester in Harrington, Maine. As a 12-year-old boy, Worcester had visited Washington D.C. and the Arlington National Cemetery for the first time. The indelible impression of the vast cemetery stayed in his soul. When Mr. Worcester retired, he created a way to honor soldiers, especially ones who made the ultimate sacrifice.

From those humble beginnings at Arlington National Cemetery, today WAA reaches across the nation and even to our international American cemeteries.

While we at AWON observe the date of our Father's death, we also respect our national dates of remembrance through the official Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Veterans Day commemorations. National Wreaths Across America Day is another opportunity for us to pay our respects and remember the sacrifices of our fathers and the other young men just like our fathers, true American heroes.

In 2020, AWON will continue our outreach project with WAA. If we as members actively participate, AWON interaction with WAA, a huge and nationally renowned organization, will help expand awareness of AWON, enabling us to possibly find more of our fellow orphans.

Above all else, we align with the WAA stated purpose: Remember, Honor and Teach, for WAA is committed to teaching younger generations where the value of their freedom rests. This AWON outreach project can broaden our ongoing commitment for lasting remembrance of the selfless sacrifice by our heroes.

Recognition day for Wreaths Across America was established in 2008 by the United States Congress, to be observed each December 13. In 2020 the placing of the WAA wreaths will be held on Saturday, December 19. The extensive national WAA organization offers the opportunity to send $15 for a wreath and also fund additional wreaths. WAA is a non-profit 501-(c) (3). Additionally, WAA needs and welcomes volunteers regardless of location.

To read more about WAA's broad national and international involvement, one can go to their website, sign up for the weekly newsletter, and/or visit their home office in Columbia Falls, Maine. The Wreaths Across America website is found at: www.wreathsacrossamerica.org

Mailing address for Wreaths Across America: WAA, P.O. Box 249, Columbia Falls, Maine, 04623.

And one of the easiest ways to order from WAA is by phone: 877-385-9504.

Deadline to order is November 23, 2020
Let's make our holiday season more meaningful by enhancing the remembrance of our Fathers through a joint commitment with Wreaths Across America, and beyond the United States. Join AWON's new Wreaths Across America outreach project!

How do AWON members or supportive family engage in this important outreach project?

You can help in two ways:
1. donating funds for a wreath or wreaths
2. volunteering to help WAA in the placement of thousands of wreaths

One wreath is $15. The most common donation is $75 (five wreaths) but smaller donations are accepted. It is critical that anyone wishing to donate do so by November 23, 2020. All funds are due in the WAA office by that date.

For every 2 wreaths purchased, a third will be credited to AWON.

To volunteer requires no financial investment, only a commitment of your time.

From AWON's WAA page, you can send invites to family and friends to encourage them to donate too.

IMPORTANT!!!! For AWON to be credited with our involvement in Wreaths Across America please follow certain steps using our Group ID and Location ID. If you don't follow these steps AWON will not receive credit for your donation.

State the spelled-out Group name: American World War II Orphans Network and then the Group ID: NJ0153. The Location ID is: NAGVRW.

The online AWON direct link is: www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/NJ0153.

WAA is a non-profit 501-(c) (3). Online donations are completed securely on the WAA online fundraising page. Or if you prefer, you may mail donations by cash or check using the fundraising form available on the WAA website at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org. Remember, the deadline is November 23.

To indicate the choice of where to volunteer, on the WAA website go to the "all locations" listing and then find a convenient "specific location". Volunteers are guided by the location coordinator.

To donate wreaths to a specific cemetery, use AWON's direct link above. Click on "sponsor wreaths". A drop down menu will appear to allow you to select a cemetery (Netherlands and Luxembourg American Cemeteries are the only overseas options available for now; more ABMC sites will be added in the future). There is also an option to type in a cemetery manually. If you don't select a cemetery, your wreaths will go to any cemetery where they are needed.

Deadline to order is November 23!

Let's spread the AWON holiday spirit across the world this year! Support Wreaths Across America... Remember, Honor and Teach.
The mission of our AWON Moments series is to review AWON’s history, celebrating special moments experienced by AWON’s orphan members since Ann Bennett Mix founded the organization in 1991.

As we approach our 30th anniversary here are a few of AWON’s milestones and AWON Moments that our members have experienced.

From American WWII Orphans Network Newsletter, Vol 21, Fall 2000, GROUNDBREAKING FOR THE WWII MEMORIAL, Washington DC, November 11, 2000 - Several AWON members were present for the groundbreaking. “The presence of our Fathers was all around us. Old men in uniforms, dressed up, remembering together. Our Dads belonged there, and we were there for them, wearing our pins, feeling that old mixture of sadness and pride.” In Their Memory!

From Vol 22, Spring 2001, LINKING OBJECTS, Summary of Dr. Vamik D. Volkan’s Speech, AWON Conference, San Diego. - “Most orphans possess objects such as a telegram, a letter, a folded flag, or a photograph which have emotional impacts on them. I call these items “linking objects”. Unconsciously, such objects become a meeting place between the mourner and the mental image of the deceased and aids in the healing process. AWON members have initiated and/or completed the healing process, they understand each other’s feelings and can identify with one another. Such sharing can go a long way in making their journey towards healing easier.”

From Vol 23, Summer 2001 – AWON Conference 2002, Branson, Missouri – November 1-4 - Branson has a Veterans Museum and Wall with all the names of the war dead to include our Fathers. Conference theme: “Finding Our Fathers!”

From Vol 24, Fall 2001, New AWON Office in Indianapolis – “The AWON office has been moved from Fredericksburg, VA to Indianapolis, IN, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216.”

Unforgettable AWON Moment: Woman Puts Dad to Rest on IWO JIMA – “Patricia Armstrong watched the wreath of flowers sail over the USS Bernardino’s starboard rail, land flowers-side down in the water and drift southward out into the Pacific ocean, perhaps past the spot where her Father Austin Behan, died during the battle for Iwo Jima in 1945. 'My Father was the USS Pensacola’s executive officer. He was killed instantly. The ship took six hits,' said Armstrong. 'He was buried at sea, and I never got to participate in a service. For me, this is a real closure,' Armstrong said of an Iwo Jima commemoration ceremony held Tuesday afternoon aboard the San Bernardino, a tank landing ship.”

Unforgettable AWON Moment (courtesy of former AWON President Norm Burkey): A Trip to the Battlefields of Italy - "In 2003, my wife and I were able to make a trip to Italy sponsored by the 10th Mountain Division Association. The primary reason for the trips is to tour the battlefields where the veterans fought and to mingle with the local residents of the hill towns north of Florence where the 10th did their fighting. Even now, these residents still remember being freed from the Germans and Mussolini. Of course, the families of the veterans also make the trip. On a side trip with some of his buddies, we were able to locate the foxhole where my dad was killed on March 12, 1945. I now have a picture of me kneeling in his foxhole. None of this would have been possible without AWON.”

Please send your AWON Moment to:

AWON STAR, 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216 or president@awon.org, so we can share in the joy of knowing your Father!

Walter Linne, brother of John, Sons of Walter John Linne KIA March 24, 1945 Germershime-on-the-Rhime, Germany
American WWII Orphans Network
We here at The Star want to remind all our readers to continue practicing social distancing. It is imperative for your health and safety to stay home right now. We care about you and we don’t want to lose you!

Stay safe, stay healthy, STAY HOME!!

Hey! Keep those germs to yourself, Kid!
Practice Social Distancing!!!!
Having learned through harsh experience in WWI that voluntary rationing for a larger war effort wasn’t going to be adequate, when WWII began, the US government used the Emergency Price Control Act of January 1942 to grant the Office of Price Administration broad powers to ration food and other commodities. This was done not only to ensure the fighting men had enough food and other supplies, but also to discourage hoarding and encourage the equitable distribution of scarce resources on the homefront as well. As we all have learned firsthand this past year when stores nationwide ran out of toilet tissue, meat, and disinfectant, hoarding can quickly create shortages of goods that are normally plentiful. Under the system of rationing the government devised, beginning in May 1942, citizens were issued points with which to purchase a limited amount of sugar, meat, coffee, cooking fat, canned fish, cheese, and canned milk. Even babies were issued ration books with points to spend! These points came in the form of ration books with stamps which were combined with money to buy rationed goods.

That’s right, when you ran to the market in wartime, you didn’t only need to bring enough money, you also had to be sure you had your ration book and points to spend as well. Since many foods were limited, home cooks began to experiment with mock meat dishes based around nuts, root vegetables, and legumes, found ways to stretch meat further by combining it with vegetables and grains such as salisbury steak and meatloaf, and even to cut out the “main dish” entirely, basing meals around hearty vegetarian fare like pasta and egg-based dishes. When a lack of cooking fat made baking a challenge, clever cooks substituted in potato, tomato, and applesauce in lieu of butter, oil, oleo, and shortening.

But even as American families sacrificed and home chefs called upon every ounce of their culinary creativity, health educators, armed with newly discovered information about chemicals in foods called “vitamins” that the human body needed for optimal health, were concerned. Was this type of restricted wartime diet nutritious enough? Were Americans on the homefront - many of whom were working
in critical industries - eating an adequate diet to stay healthy and work to their fullest potential?

Against this backdrop of food insecurity, disaster struck. The Japanese cut off the world’s supply of Malaysian tin, widely used in the manufacture of tin cans. The military desperately needed all the raw tin they could get to manufacture cans to carry food to the battlefront. There was nothing left over for the homefront. American families were forced to pay exorbitant prices for fresh produce, or go without fruit and vegetables entirely and risk deficiencies in critically important nutrients like Vitamin A and C.

The solution was clear - Victory Gardens. Victory Gardens, or war gardens as they were often called, were first popularized during the First World War by future president Herbert Hoover, then head of the US Food Administration, as a way for citizens to supplement the war-suppressed food supply. During the Second World War, governments both local and national again encouraged individuals and families to grow their own food. It was believed that a family garden would save not only individual families money and provide them with superior nutrition, but could lower market prices, enabling the government to purchase food for the military men much more cheaply.

The US Department of Agriculture launched a massive program to encourage home gardening, and Americans heeded the call. Not only did families start gardens and plant fruit trees, but some even raised chickens and rabbits to supplement their family’s diet as well.

By May 1943, Victory Gardens were providing American families with 40% of all the produce they ate. The government, in cooperation with private industry, printed off millions of instruction booklets teaching laymen how to plant seeds, how to fertilize and control for pests, even introducing relatively complex agricultural ideas like companion planting and crop rotation. Americans began growing food in any patch of dirt they could find - their backyards, their front yards, even boxes of dirt set out on apartment balconies. Municipalities got into the act, planting Victory Gardens in town squares from coast to coast, and even in urban locales such as Boston Commons and on New York City’s Park Avenue. Victory Gardens were seen as not only a sound economic idea considering the expense of purchasing fresh produce and meat, but an act of patriotism.
In the meantime, women and teenagers on the homefront joined the Land Army, a program designed to provide labor to replace the men who were away fighting the war. In 1942, the United States was facing an agricultural crisis, as crops planted by men who were called up to serve their country, began to ripen and then rot in the field. Women and children with little training came to the rescue, salvaging the harvest of 1942.

For corporations and public figures, promoting the idea of Victory Gardens was nearly as popular as selling war bonds. Companies like Dr. Pepper based ad campaigns around Victory Gardens, and Frigidaire, Armour Meats, and Lysol handed out cookbooks with every purchase. Batman, Robin, and Superman started a Victory Garden. Donald Duck and his nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie followed suit. Even First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt got into the act, planting her own Victory Garden on the White House Lawn.

Under the umbrella of the Emergency Farm Labor Service, between 1943 and 1947, over a million American women were recruited to the Women’s Land Army. Even though many were city dwellers, they received agricultural training and a very low wage (with which they were required to purchase their own clothing and pay for room and board) to work the farms that supplied the troops and citizens with farm goods. Women learned to plant and harvest, drive tractors, shear sheep - whatever they were needed for, they did!
While gardening and canning did become less popular once the war ended, many folks who grew up in the post-war generations have happy memories of family members, who lived through wartime, passing down the knowledge they had gathered from growing their Victory Garden - tilling the soil, harvesting the crops, preserving them for the winter, making do with what one has and finding ways to fill in the gaps while still living within one's means.

The USDA estimates that over the course of the war, over 20 million Victory Gardens were planted, yielding 9-10 million tons of food. In New York City alone, more than 200 million pounds of vegetables were harvested.

The Victory Garden program created some interesting side effects, making gardening and canning into hobbies that many Americans would continue to pursue over the course of their entire lifetime, and popularizing some unusual vegetables that Americans weren’t familiar with. Swiss Chard, kohlrabi, and zucchini which were practically unknown to many Americans before the war, became garden standbys due to how easy they were to grow. They remain popular homegrown veggies to this very day.
Call for Tributes!

Add a Tribute to the AWON Website! This could be one of the most long-lasting and satisfying ways to remember your Father, Grandfather, Brother, or Uncle. Just be a current AWON Member!

Here’s How: 1. Have a look at our website’s TRIBUTE section at www.awon.org (click “Our Fathers”) to see what others have done; 2. Check the web page on “How to prepare a Father Tribute” – (at www.awon.org/check5.html); then 3. Scan (or have a Kinko’s scan) your best picture of your loved one in uniform; 4. Collect your thoughts, memories, and service record of your loved one; 5. Send your JPG-formatted image and between 500 and 1,100 words to our Tribute Stager, Nancy Sue Johnson. Her E-Mail address is . . . janceysue@gmail.com. If you need her snailmail address, just call Nancy Sue at 406/529-2315. Don’t let another day go by. AWON is honored to help you honor your Father or loved one! . . . a Tribute page is yours for the asking.

AWON Wishes to Thank Our New and Renewing Members
From August, September, and October

Valerie Flynn
Philippe DeHand
MaryLee Obert
Michael S, Davis
Daniel Crough
David Kaufman
Jamie Duke McCollum
Karen Yancy
Carla Holcomb
Judith Peter
Diane Baczynski
Donna Allen
Judy Gamble
Apryl Graham
Elda Hoffeer
John Paskey
Maxine Stanley
Fred Lubinger
Karen Lynch
Geri DeMicco

Arthur Clark
Ann Benham
Stephen Cardillo
Rosalend Grabowski
Pat Armstrong
Ed Peters
Camille Mueller
Wayne Johnston
Michael Naya
Anne Wile
Dawn Martin
Donald Berube
Richard Basile
Thom Kettle
Penny Bernstein
Jocelyn Mc Comb
Richard Tiedeman
Deborah Lannon
Jerry Baker
The Star Guidelines for Submitting Material

We want to tell your story and your family's story. We accept submissions both electronically and via US mail. If you have an article or picture and aren't sure how to submit it, that's ok. Message The Star and we will work with you.

Please keep text reasonable in length. 500-1000 words or 1 page is a good guideline, but we publish longer pieces too. Preference is given to material written by, for, and about AWON members and families.

Authors retain copyright to published original writing. Permission to reprint should be obtained from the author by contacting the editor.

Kristin Holmes, Editor
PO Box 242, Creston WA 99117 (509) 279-5241
atomicsagebrush@gmail.com

Make Sure the Next Generation Hears YOUR Family Story!!!!

The STAR needs your submissions today!

Don't let those stories go untold!!

As we head into AWON's Thirtieth year, we here at The Star want to urge every AWON member to share the story of your father's life, your family's loss, and your personal journey to learn more about where you came from. Please don't hesitate - contribute! It's easy - our editors will do all the hard stuff, we just need to hear from YOU! Submit today!

All AWON members in good standing are invited to participate in AWON's Facebook page, and test out our brand new MeWe page! To find out more about MeWe (it's just like Facebook, but with better privacy protections) and receive an invitation to join AWON's MeWe Page contact Lorin McCleary at ldmccleary@gmail.com.

National Wreaths Across America Day is coming December 19, 2020! Please see pages 4-5 for more info about how you can get involved to Remember, Honor, and Teach. The deadline for ordering is Nov. 23!
Membership

This is a
☐ New Membership
☐ Renewal
☐ Family Membership
☐ Database Registration Only

About You:
Name ________________________________________
Address _______________________________________
City/State/Zip __________________________________
Home Phone _________________________
Mobilephone _________________________
E-Mail _______________________________________

If you're renewing, skip to the Dues Section
Your Relationship to Serviceman ___________________
Your Date of Birth ______________________
How did you hear about AWON ____________________

About your WWII Service Member:
Last Name ______________________________________
First Name _____________________________ M.I.____
Birthdate ___________________________________
Hometown & State ______________________________
Military Unit ___________________________________
Rank _______ Service Number ___________________
Date of Death ____________ Place _______________
Burial Location _______________________________
Wife's Maiden Name ____________________________
Additional information on your WWII Service Member's
Military Service, Death, or Burial. ___________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

Membership Types:
☐ Orphan Member: Any son or daughter of a
member of the US Armed Forces, Coast Guard, or
Merchant Marine who was killed, remains missing in
action, or who died in the line of duty, or who later died
of wounds or injuries sustained during WWII.

☐ Family Member: Other relations who are not a son or daughter.

☐ Supporting Member: Other individuals with an interest in WWII,
who wish to support us and participate in our outreach activities
and programs.

Membership Dues:
Basic Orphan Member Dues are $25 a year – starting when we
receive your check. This includes your AWON Membership Card,
a Web Tribute for your father, a physical or E-version of our
quarterly newsletter, The Star, a personal account on the AWON
online List-serv, and an account on the AWON Facebook Page.

Family Member Dues are $25 a year – including a printed Star –
OR $10 a year for Membership with an E-Star.

Supporting Member Dues are $25 a year – including either
version of The Star.

Membership Dues Levels:
Please circle your Dues Level below:

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Donation Considerations:
Memorial Day Wreath Fund $ ________
General Operations & Outreach $ ________
Total Dues & Donations Enclosed $ ________

Please send your check:
Payable to AWON, include it with this form and send it to:

AWON Treasurer
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216

AWON (American WWII Orphans Network) is a humanitarian, non-profit, nonpolitical service organization under Section 501(c)3 of the US Federal Tax Code. (EIN#: 91-1538912) Membership is not required to be entered into the Database. For more information, the AWON Website is at www.awon.org.
In Issue 96 of The Star, we heard the story of SSG Harry Vandercar, who sacrificed his life to save a fellow soldier, and the journey that Vandercar's daughters Elaine Vandercar Broderick and Lois Vandercar Ciccone undertook to have this American hero's remains interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

On October 11, 2019, SSG Harry R. Vandercar of the 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery, amongst his comrades in arms.

But for Lois Vandercar Ciccone, only eleven months old when her father was killed, the story was not yet finished. On the day her father was interred, his tombstone had not yet been put in place, and so during a recent trip Lois was able to stop at Arlington, visit her father's grave, and see his tombstone for the first time.

As Lois so eloquently put it, "My heart is bursting with pride and happiness that I know he will be Forever taken care of long after my sister and I are gone. It was a beautiful moment for me knowing that this long journey came to such a happy ending for this Hero."

Above - SSG Harry Vandercar, now laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery

Bottom Right: at long last, Lois Vandercar Ciccone sees her father's gravestone for the first time

Bottom Left - the memorial Lois created in her home to honor her father every day
With the Covid-19 virus restricting public gatherings, in 2020 Memorial Day parades and cemetery visits were banned in most locations. However, many places compensated for this in different ways. I recently learned of the Hometown Hero Banners program in the small town of Vandergrift, PA.

This is the town where my family grew up and lived for several generations. So, when I heard about the banners, I had to buy one for my father, Capt. Malcolm L. George. He spent his whole life in Vandergrift, marrying his high school sweetheart, and working in his father’s plumbing and heating business after graduating from Pennsylvania State University.

While in college, he enrolled in ROTC and continued to be part of the Officers’ Reserve Corps while continuing to work with his father.

In May of 1941, he was ordered to active duty. On June 7, 1944, he was KIA on Omaha Beach, France. He had organized volunteers in a successful assault on the enemy which had been firing into the rear and flanks of the advancing troops. It was then that he lost his life.

Vandergrift’s Hometown Hero Banners are designed to honor veterans and first responders. The banners include the name and photo of the honoree as testament to their service. These are hung by volunteers throughout the town a few days before Memorial Day because it takes a few days to hang the 200+ banners.

As one woman from the Victorian Vandergrift Museum and Historical Society said, “The banners look wonderful lining the streets.”

The Banner is a wonderful way to honor my father. It means a lot to me to see my father honored in his home town. I know his parents and his wife would have appreciated it, too.
“You (AWON) are an organization with whom we would like to work much more closely.” So said Holly Rotondi, the Executive Director of Friends of the National WWII Memorial.

During the week of October 12, 2020, Rotondi spoke on the phone with Rondy Elliott, the newly approved AWON volunteer serving as Liaison with the Friends of the National WWII Memorial.

Rotondi shared some exciting news with AWON. Now that Friends of the Memorial have wrapped up events in commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the end of The War, author/historian Alex Kershaw has suggested that their theme for the upcoming year might be “Coming Home” - a subject those of us involved with AWON are all too familiar with.

Many on the Friends' Board have heartily agreed with this suggested theme. If "Coming Home" does indeed end up being the selected theme for 2021, Ms. Rotondi said that AWON members could possibly end up playing a big role in the celebration. Under the Friends' umbrella, historians and researchers would like to interview AWON members about our fallen fathers, and what life was like without them—after everyone else came home and normal life resumed for many Americans - but not all.

As yet, the board of Friends of the National WWII Memorial have not decided how individual AWON members might be selected to do this. AWON Liaison Rondy Elliot will continue to ask Ms. Rotondi about this process, and will keep us all up to speed on any new developments.

In the here and now, on the third Saturday of every month from October through March, 2021 from 10 AM-1:30 PM, the Friends of The National WWII Memorial will be holding a Monthly Virtual Educational Conference series featuring input from several different experts on various subjects relating to WWII. Due to Covid, the conferences will be held online, enabling anyone across the nation to participate. Registration is required, but is free: https://www.wwiimemorialteachers.org/education-series

Friends of the National WWII Memorial will also be holding a “Teachers Conference” in July of 2021. Though anyone can apply, 80 teachers will be selected to participate. Since many AWON members have been teachers, you may be interested in participating in this very special opportunity. If you are a teacher or former teacher, please consider calling Holly Rotondi at 202-675-2017 or emailing info@wwiimemorialfriends.org to inquire how you can apply to take part.
There is no mystery about where or how my father was killed in action in WWII.

There were many eyewitnesses when the Jeep ambulance carrying four casualties from the front lines on Ie Shima (a small island offshore Okinawa) hit an improvised land mine killing all five, including its driver - my father, Captain Donald W. Cheff M.D.

He was the only doctor from Delaware killed in combat in any war to that time.

The mystery came after his death and eventual internment in the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific on Oahu, HI. His colleagues, the doctors of Delaware, raised money for a stone plaque in his honor. There was an effort to name the VA Hospital under construction in 1948 near Wilmington, DE in his honor. The U.S. Senate did pass a bill that would have named the hospital for a Medal of Honor winner (WWII) from Delaware. A chapel was to be added to the Hospital and it was expected the chapel would be named for my father and, presumably, a decorative stone plaque honoring him would be affixed to the chapel wall.

When my father joined the 77th Infantry Division and found he was on the way to the Pacific theater in 1944, my mother, sister and I moved in with her parents in Waynesboro PA. I remember when my grandfather told me my father would not be coming home. I had already started kindergarten at 4.

After I started second grade, my mother obtained a job as a medical technician with the DuPont Experimental Station and we moved back to Wilmington. In 1951, my mother remarried and we all moved to a 60-acre farm near Akron OH. Mr. Krismann, a manager for DuPont’s facility in Akron, adopted me and my sister. I went to a top Prep school near the farm which helped me enter Amherst College. From there I got an MBA from Columbia University in New York City. I would spend the next 41 years in or near Manhattan before moving to Arizona with my family in 2004.

Though my life took its own many twists and turns, I never forgot my father. I would periodically learn something that told me more about him than I'd previously known. One source was a publication – The Delaware Medical Journal. That’s where I learned about the probable existence of a memorial plaque.

One article indicated that the VA Chapel would be named for my father. When I found myself with plenty of time after retiring, I began to research my mystery: why, despite what I’d uncovered in my research about the Senate's intent to honor war heroes, is the VA Hospital simply called the Wilmington VA Hospital, and the chapel within is just the chapel?

The Chief Chaplain at the Wilmington VA Hospital could not shed any light on any of this. Eventually I contacted the Delaware Academy of Medicine.

Captain Donald W. Cheff M.D. of the 77th Infantry, KIA on the island of Ie Shima, near Okinawa. Dr. Cheff was honored with a memorial plaque outside the chapel of the Wilmington, DE VA Hospital in 2020.
One of the executives took the time to explore the basement. He miraculously located the plaque honoring my father, and hand-delivered it to the care of the Chief Chaplain at the nearby VA Hospital. The Chaplain could not do anything further without approval, and referred me to others in the VA hospital hierarchy. Nothing. I wrote twice to Joe Biden. He lives nearby in Wilmington and is allegedly a staunch supporter of veterans. Should be a slam dunk. No response.

Along came Covid. The graduation and any VA ceremony were cancelled. Long story short, with many twists and turns, the plaque finally was affixed near the VA Chapel door without ceremony this October.

My father was the commanding officer of a medical battalion that set up a clearing station on the beach of Ie Shima to triage our wounded soldiers. He commandeered two jeep ambulances when they were put ashore. Since they had no patients to treat, he drove one of the jeeps to bring wounded back to the clearing station. He could easily have delegated this task. It was known the sandy road was mined, but he did a round trip and, inexplicably repeated the trip. On the second return, disaster struck. For this action, he received the Silver Star and Purple Heart. He did something similar in a previous battle in the Philippines. Again, the clearing station was too far for the litter bearers. He commandeered an amphibious DUKW, loaded the wounded GIs and walked alongside it for hundreds of yards of flooded rice paddies. He was awarded the Bronze Star for this action.

Doctors were usually located in the rear echelon away from the major fighting. It was unusual for them to receive such medals. I personally think there is a good chance he was one of the most highly decorated doctors in the Pacific theater in WWII – 75 years ago this year of 2020. He is certainly deserving of being memorialized for his courage and tremendous sacrifice.

As a member of AWON, I learned of Rik Peirson, webmaster of the AWON website. He did a great job for which I am most appreciative. Check out my father’s tribute at http://www.awon2.org/fathers/awcheff.html.
Help Wanted!!

An AWON membership chairperson and volunteers to assist!

Part of AWON’s mission is to find the other 100,000+ war orphans out there. We need your help!

In AWON’s data base we have over 5,000 names but not all these people are active dues paying members. We need help to reach out to those members who have lapsed, and to find more of our long lost orphan siblings who do not know us yet.

Can you help? Please message Barry Barr-Finch: barrfinch1@gmail.com or Judi Kramer: ladybug5@juno.com for more information about how you can get involved!!

One of AWON's biggest challenges is keeping membership up to date. If you aren't sure about your status and think it may be time for you to renew, please send an email to: awon@awon.org.

In the subject line of your email, please write "Membership Check". If it is time for you to renew, we'll include your membership form in our reply!! It's so easy!

To join AWON or renew membership yourself visit: www.awon.org/membership.html

AWON Director Email Addresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barry Barr-Finch</th>
<th><a href="mailto:barrfinch1@gmail.com">barrfinch1@gmail.com</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul Bremer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bremergolf@aol.com">bremergolf@aol.com</a></td>
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<td>Barbara George</td>
<td><a href="mailto:blgeorge@aol.com">blgeorge@aol.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Judi Kramer</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ladybug5@juno.com">ladybug5@juno.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gloria Layne</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:wlinne@iupui.edu">wlinne@iupui.edu</a></td>
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<td>Lorin McCleary</td>
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<td>Ann Mix</td>
<td><a href="mailto:annmix@gmail.com">annmix@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>Rik Peirson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rik@dayone.com">rik@dayone.com</a></td>
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<td>Robert Meek</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rhmeekjr@gmail.com">rhmeekjr@gmail.com</a></td>
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AWON 2020 EOM Account Totals

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<td><strong>A Bit of Earth</strong></td>
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<td><strong>K.I.A.: An Orphan’s Search for His Father Through the Fog of War</strong></td>
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<td>By Jerry W. Pinkerton</td>
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Price List / Order Form

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by Mark LaPoint, grandson of Sgt. William G. Aubet featuring Somewhere in Germany, written and sung by Mark at AWON’s 10th conference memorial service $6.00

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For more information and color photos please visit http://www.awon2.org/resources/bookstore.html

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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.

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