



The Star



Issue #108

"We Speak Their Names"

Spring 2023

100 Years of the ABMC

Thanks for all you do, American Battle Monuments Commission!



The American Battle Monuments Commission, created in 1923 in the aftermath of WWI and tasked with the creation and maintenance of American military cemeteries overseas, is celebrating its 100th birthday in 2023.

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We have all your summer entertainment needs met in this edition of The Star! Look inside Issue 108 for book suggestions and video recommendations to help you beat the heat!

2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the creation of the American Battle Monuments Commission. ABMC is the organization in charge of managing America's overseas cemeteries and memorials, tasked with honoring the service, achievements, and sacrifice of US Armed forces.

From its inception 100 years ago, the mission of ABMC is to commemorate the services of the US Armed Forces, wherever they have served, since April 6, 1917. In pursuit of this goal, the ABMC has established war memorials and designed and constructed US military burial grounds in foreign countries that it then operates and maintains. The ABMC also sets the standard for, and supervises the design and construction of, US military monuments and markers in foreign countries created by American citizens and organizations - both public and private - and encourages the proper maintenance of these monuments and markers by their sponsors.

Following WWI, it became clear that federal control over the commemoration of American armed forces overseas was required. On March 4, 1923, President Warren Harding signed legislation that established the American Battle Monuments Commission. Soon after ABMC's creation, Congress directed the organization to construct memorial chapels in the eight permanent military cemeteries in Europe, which were at that time maintained by the War Department. Led by General of the Armies John J. Pershing, who served as Chairman of ABMC from 1923-1948, ABMC was made responsible for the creation of monuments honoring the American Expeditionary Forces that fought during World War I.

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President's Message

by Walt Linne

As the year 2023 is at its halfway point and quickly moving towards 2024...I know, we don't have to be reminded how quickly the time is passing...whew! However, there are a few things I need to catch everyone up on...

Our stated AWON Mission remains unchanged, but the passing of time accelerating at the speed of sound (767 mph), requires us to remain active in recruiting new members and reaching out to past members. Now is the time. Please consider contacting your local newspaper or radio station with a story about the American WWII Orphans Network (AWON) like we did in the "old days" ...oops, I mean like we used to do when AWON was in its infancy.

The future of AWON is in our hands and the Communication Committee is striving to improve our communications skills in our process of reaching out to our orphans and the next generation to preserve the memories of our beloved fathers for future generations.

Our active membership numbers remain constant, allowing us to continue to interact with like organizations and to preserve the memory of our Fathers who have lost their life in all wars, fighting to maintain our freedom. "In Their Memory".

We have received notification from Stephen Watson, CEO of the National WWII Museum, that the Liberation Pavilion (with an area dedicated to the Cost of War) and the Col. Battle Barksdale Parade Ground (where AWON has their Victory Paver) has been completed and will open on November 3, 2023. More information is to follow. Hopefully many of us can be in attendance! (see page 20 for info.)

And finally, the AWON 2024 National Conference is in its early planning stage for the coming spring and Western location. We are always in need of conference volunteers. Please contact us.

In Their Memory - Never Forgotten!



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...ABMC 100th, from front page



Above: An honor guard stands watch at Netherlands American Cemetery, Memorial Day 1945.



Left: Working with the organization Operation Benjamin, ABMC has replaced the religious markers on several graves with the marker appropriate to the religious beliefs of the fallen soldier.

In 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an Executive Order shifting the responsibility for management and maintenance of the overseas military cemeteries completely to ABMC.

Final dispositions of the remains of service personnel were carried out under the provisions of laws passed by Congress. These laws entitled the next of kin of a fallen soldier to select permanent interment of a family member's remains in an American military cemetery, on foreign soil designed, constructed, and maintained specifically to honor, in perpetuity, the dead of these wars. Alternatively, the next of kin could choose to have the remains repatriated to the United States for interment in a national or private cemetery. According to the book *Buried on the Battlefield - Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead from World War Two*, this choice, offered only by America to her Gold Star Families, was not looked upon kindly by some of our allies, who feared their own citizens' reactions to not having their own sons treated in the same fashion.

When war came again, ABMC's WWII commemorative program entailed the construction of fourteen permanent WWII



Above and Below: Politics take a back seat to honor and respect during presidential visits to ABMC sites.

Above - President Donald Trump visiting Normandy American Cemetery on the 75th anniversary of D-Day, 2019 (photo by Mandel Ngan)

Below: President Barack Obama at Normandy on the 70th anniversary of D-Day, 2014 (photo - NBC News)



ABMC, Continued page 4

American military cemeteries on foreign soil, the construction of several monuments and memorials, and the construction of three war memorials in the United States. In addition to landscaped grave areas and nonsectarian chapels, the ABMC overseas WWII-era cemeteries contain memorials, sculptures, battle maps, a visitor reception center, and narratives depicting the course of war in the region. Every detail, [including the trees selected and their placement](#), is planned to convey the ultimate in peace, dignity, and respect.

Each grave site is marked by a headstone of pristine white marble. Headstones featuring either a Star of David or a Latin cross mark the graves. In cooperation with Operation Benjamin, an organization dedicated to seeking recognition for Jewish soldiers, over the course of time ABMC has replaced 23 Christian headstones, placed in error, with the Star of David. Three of them were replaced just this past year.

Unidentified dead from the Second World War are identified by a grave marker stating “Here Rests in Honored Glory a Comrade in Arms Known but to God”. Almost 6,000 unknown soldiers of the WWII era are buried at ABMC cemeteries. Each American servicemember missing, lost, or buried at sea from World War II is represented by name on the Walls of the Missing at an ABMC site. The Walls of the Missing honor the memory of 78,985 missing soldiers from World War II. When remains are identified by the Department of Defense, a rosette (photo) is added to the individual’s name on the Walls of the Missing to denote that their remains have been recovered and identified. While the overseas cemeteries are, for the most part, closed to new burials, newly identified remains are the only authorized new burials allowed at the WWII era ABMC sites.

By the end of WWII, the US Army had established several hundred temporary burial grounds around the world. By 1947, ABMC, working with the Secretary of the Army, had selected fourteen



Above: The WWII-era grave marker honoring the unknown fallen buried at ABMC sites.

Below: The rosette indicating a name on the Wall of the Missing has been recovered.



sites in foreign countries to become permanent American military cemeteries. The chosen locations of these cemeteries corresponded with the course of military operations. They were turned over to ABMC after the interments had been completed by the Graves Registration Service, in a manner proposed by an ABMC-appointed cemetery architect and approved by the ABMC.

After the war, all temporary cemeteries not designated as permanent were disestablished by the War Department, and any remains present were permanently interred in accordance with the direction of the next of kin. As had been the case with the WWI cemeteries, the WWII cemeteries were permanent military burial grounds granted in perpetuity by the respective host countries,

...ABMC, continued from previous page

free of charge and taxation. With the exception of the Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines, in which members of the Philippine Army who fought alongside US troops are interred alongside their American compatriots, only Americans may be buried at ABMC sites. American civilian technicians, Red Cross workers and entertainers serving the military were treated as if they were members of the armed forces and were considered eligible for interment at ABMC cemeteries.

Today, ABMC administers, operates and maintains 26 permanent American burial grounds and 32 federal memorials, monuments, and markers on foreign soil. It also maintains four memorials in the United States: the World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C.; the Honolulu memorial located within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii; the West Coast Memorial located within the Presidio National Park in San Francisco, CA. and the East Coast Memorial located within Battery City Park in New York, N.Y. (the National WWII Memorial, although built by the ABMC, is maintained by the National Park Service). Today there are over 124,000 American war dead interred in ABMC cemeteries - 92,958 from World War Two.

Since March 4, 1923, the American Battle Monument Commission's sacred mission remains to honor the service, achievements, and sacrifice of more than 200,000 U.S. service members buried and memorialized at ABMC sites. As John J. Pershing said, "Time will not dim the glory of their deeds."

In honor of their 100th anniversary, the ABMC has created **Our Promise: 100 Years of the American Battle Monuments Commission** - a 56 minute documentary produced to celebrate a hundred years of commemoration and ABMC's centennial. **Our Promise** honors both the sacrifice of the fallen and the dedication of ABMC staff to ensure the unique mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission is fulfilled. The documentary showcases the agency's ongoing

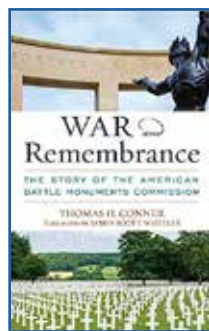
work to preserve the legacy of those memorialized at ABMC sites as well as the evolution of the



organization's mission, and then looks forward to the next 100 years of ABMC service. You can find **Our Promise** online here:

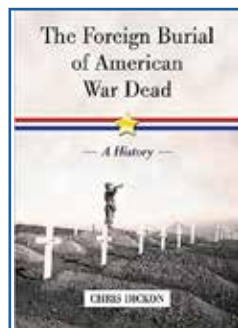
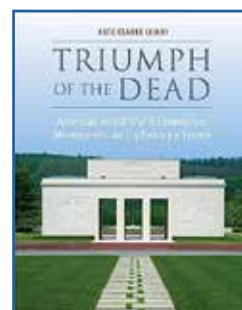
<https://youtu.be/-XIHcQQc-nM>

Editor's Note: If the history of the ABMC and American military burials is interesting to you, I've come across a few similarly themed books that AWON members might enjoy:



[War and Remembrance: The Story of the American Battle Monuments Commission](#) by Thomas H. Connor is the complete story of ABMC since its creation in 1923.

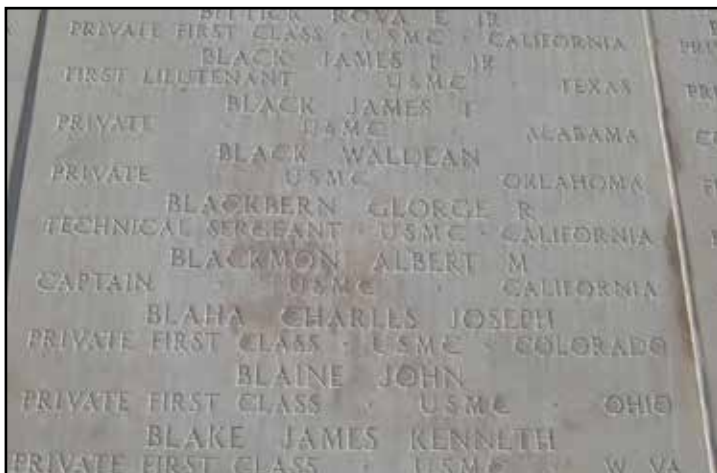
[Triumph of the Dead: American World War II Cemeteries, Monuments, and Diplomacy in France](#) by Katie Clarke Le May investigates diplomatic & cross-cultural challenges faced by ABMC.



[The Foreign Burial of American War Dead: A History](#) by Chris Dickon is an overview of all the American war dead buried overseas, including in non-ABMC locations.

My Father, George Blackburn

by Peggy Blackburn Meyers



Above: George Blackburn's name as it appears at the Courts of the Missing, at the Honolulu Memorial, within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific

My father and his brother Harry enlisted in the Marines on May 28, 1942. The brothers trained together and challenged each other to see who could advance first in rank. After basic training, they spent 22 months in the South Pacific.

Upon returning to the United States, my father was granted leave and returned to his home in Placerville, California. He was then sent to Mohave. While stationed in Mohave, he met Mary Jane Moore, a member of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. They were married on March 26, 1944, in Ormsby County, Nevada.

When my father was stationed in San Diego, my mother resigned her position and moved to Placerville to be with her in-laws while awaiting the birth of her first child.

My Grandfather Blackburn sent a telegram to my father on January 8, 1945, stating that I was about to be born, and advising him to get home as soon as he could. I was born later that day and named Margaret Diane Blackburn. While my father wasn't able to be there for my birth, he did get leave and returned home on January 20. He was only able to stay for a single day, through January 21. During that short period of time, my mother told me that every little whimper or sound brought my father to my cradle. He would pick me up and Mother said the look on his face was pure love.

He then reported for duty on the Bunker Hill.

I treasure the stories and pictures my family has shared over the years. My father wore the Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon, the American Theater Ribbon, the National Defense Ribbon, the Good Conduct Award, a Presidential Unit Citation, and

On May 11, 1945, just a few days before WWII ended, the carrier Bunker Hill was attacked by two Japanese suicide planes. Many lives were lost, but the remaining crew was able to stop the fires and bring the carrier back to US waters. My father, Technical Sergeant George Blackburn, was not one of the lucky ones who came home. He was buried with honors at sea.

Below: The kamikaze attack on the Bunker Hill left 352 confirmed dead and an additional 41 missing, with 264 sailors left wounded.





*Above: Fallen Hero George Blackburn, father of
AWON member Peggy Blackburn Meyers*



*Above: Marine Corps Women's Reservist
Mary Jane Moore, future wife of George Blackburn*

three campaign stars. He was also awarded the Purple Heart. During the war, my Grandmother Blackburn sent a letter to the mother of combat pilot and war hero Gregory "Pappy" Boyington about her son's exploits. Upon my father's death, "Pappy" Boyington sent my grandmother a personal letter expressing his sincere sympathy in the loss of her son.

My mother eventually remarried and I was raised in a loving home by her and my stepfather, Victor Davis, along with my two half-brothers. Although I never got to know my father, I loved him and wondered how my life would have been different had he survived.

I have had a good life, a child of my own, two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Still, there is a missing spot in my heart for the father I never got to know.

All these years later we have still not learned to live together rather than to fight each other. I wonder if there will ever be peace and harmony.

Below: The Blackburns, together too briefly



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**A Gathering of Warbirds:
Midatlantic Air Museum's
WWII Weekend 2023**

By Stewart "Rusty" Lerch



A Gathering of Warbirds, the Mid-Atlantic War Museum's 32nd annual World War II Weekend, took place June 2nd, 3rd, and 4th 2023, at the Reading, PA Mid Atlantic Air Museum. Once again it was a show to remember, and a step back in time to the critical days of our fathers and the fight for freedom around the world.

With more than 1,700 WWII military and civilian reenactors representing many nations, you could stroll down Main Street, U.S.A. and visit your grandmother's house one day and the next day experience battles and skirmishes between the French Resistance, Allied and German troops at the ruined French Village. You could hear the thunder of tanks and artillery pieces being fired, witness American infantry and armor attack the Wehrmacht across open ground or watch a recreation of the iconic flag-raising on Mt. Suribachi by the United States Marines. If you wanted a piece of this history, you could visit the 120 vendors in the militaria flea market and even have your own set of dog tags made just for you.

The entertainment was top notch throughout the day and the big bands were superb during the evening. Airplane rides took place each of the three days and the air show itself was fantastic. A Japanese airplane that was used in the movie *Tora! Tora! Tora!* was donated to the air museum and drew much attention.

Several WWII veterans and many WWII family members stopped by our table this year and many Gold Star family members stop by and shared stories of the loved ones they lost. As

Orphan's Poem

By Susan Roodenberg Perko
Daughter of Major William Henry Roodenberg

I tried so hard to please my mom,
A task too great for me.
Her husband went away to war
And we would never see
Him 'ere again, for he was killed
And I was less than three.
"Come home again, my Daddy dear"
Was my incessant plea,
"And save my mom, she's so distraught."
A task too great for me."

always, and as it should be, the stars of the show were the WWII veterans, so few left now. The oldest was 102 and his table was across from ours. He did say he would be back next year, God willing I hope he is.

To all my AWON family I say with love,
"I'll Be Seeing You..."
Stewart "Rusty" Lerch

Right: AWON Great-Granddaughter Susannah Holmes proudly shows off her copy of the 2023 Reading, PA WWII Weekend poster.



AWON Members -
Is your father buried in
a national cemetery?

Check out the Veterans
Legacy Memorial (VLM)!

VLM is an online memorial
space (website) managed
by the National Cemetery
Administration (NCA).

NCA manages over
150 American national
cemeteries honoring our
Nation's fallen veterans,
memorializing more
than 3.7 million veterans
interred in our national
cemeteries with a digital
memorial. A VLM profile
page is provided for each
veteran, to which personal
touches like photos and
tributes can be added.

Find out more by visiting
the VLM homepage at:
www.va.gov/remember

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 your text
reasonable in length.
500-1000 words or 1 page is
a good guideline, but
longer pieces can work too.

Preference is given to
material written by, for, and
about AWON members
and families. But we also
publish items of general
interest about the WWII era.

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

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My Grandparents' War on PBS - don't miss it!

By Kristin Holmes

There's an amazing series running on PBS right now that I think AWON members will really enjoy. *My Grandparents' War* features the stories of several famous British actors and actresses as they learn more about their family's experiences and struggles during the Second World War. As the PBS site describes it, "they'll discover remarkable stories of bravery amid the most harrowing circumstances, uncovering the life-and-death decisions their grandparents were forced to make. The series examines universal themes of love, courage and self-sacrifice through the dramatic human stories of ordinary people caught up in one of the most horrific wars of all time."

The stars include Helena Bonham Carter, Kristin Scott Thomas, Keira Knightley, Toby Jones, and Kit Harington from *Game of Thrones*, among others.

What I found most interesting about the premise of the series is that the producers really manage to capture the vast swath of human experiences during the war years. World War II truly was a global war that cut across cultures and classes and it was extremely interesting to see how different people were affected by the conflict and how they handled the challenges set before them in a variety of ways. Stories told range all across Europe, Asia, and Africa and I really got a good feel for the breadth of the war effort. No one was left untouched.

My only complaint is that they don't have an American version of the show!

If you like the show *Finding Your Roots*, and are interested in the war years, you will really enjoy *My Grandparents' War*. If you can't find the show on your local PBS station, you can stream all the episodes whenever you want by visiting the PBS website or use this link: [My Grandparents' War](#)

The new MeWe ListServ



Be Sure to Follow AWON on Social
Media!!! It's the best way to keep in touch
with your AWON siblings nowadays!



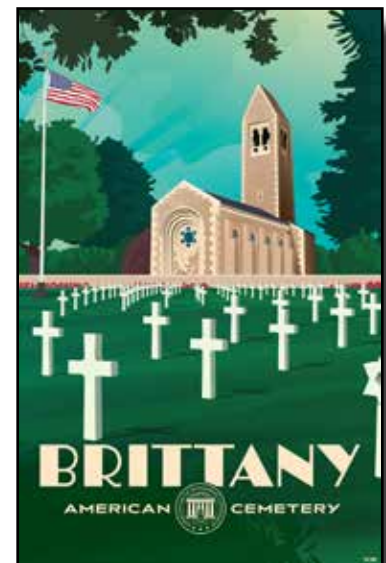
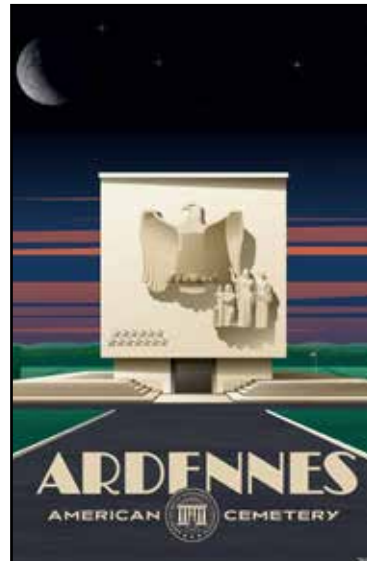
In honor of its centennial, the American Battle Monuments Commission has unveiled original vintage-style works of art representing all 26 foreign cemeteries and four monuments maintained by ABMC.

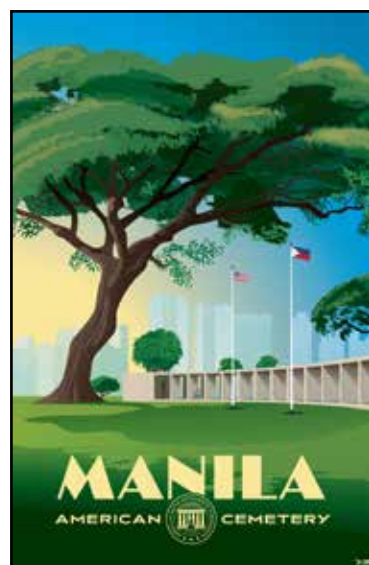
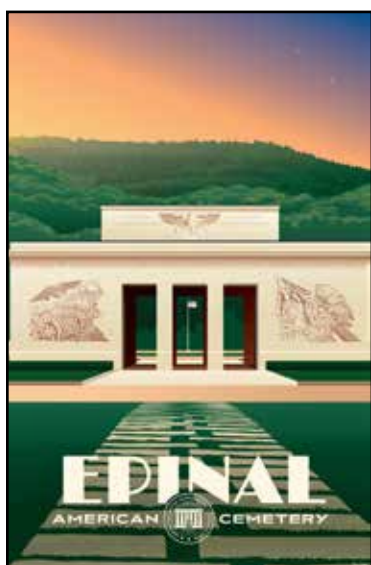
The project was inspired by the Federal Art project that the government released after the Great Depression to promote its parks and showcase landscapes that belonged to the American people. Overseen by the Visitor Services and Interpretation (VSI) directorate, this vintage poster project was an attempt at recreating a similar project, with the goal of inviting the American public to visit ABMC sites and place them as true must-see places.

To mark ABMC's centennial and the uniqueness of each ABMC site, a vintage poster series was created by French artist DOZ. These gorgeous posters highlight unique features of ABMC overseas cemeteries and commemorative sites, showing that these sites are living sites where visitors, young and old, local and international, get to spend a unique moment of life while honoring America's fallen.

While all the posters are stunning, in the interest of space we are sharing only the WWII ABMC overseas site posters for readers of **The Star**. The others can be found here:

[ABMC Vintage Posters 2023](#)





...Vintage ABMC Posters, continued page 12

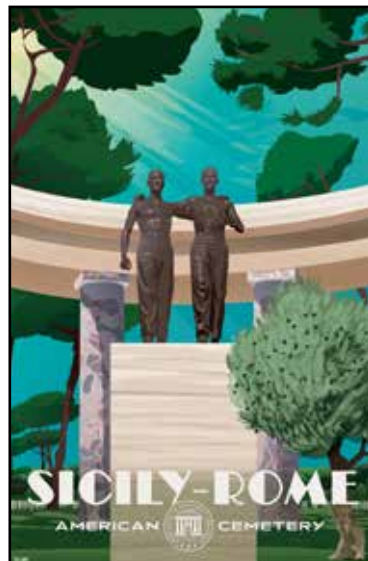
Have you visited AWON's "Lest We Forget" page recently?

On our AWON website at www.awon.org, we have a special page dedicated to our AWON siblings and other extended AWON family members who have passed away. In the words of AWON Webmaster Rik Peirson, we will never forget them, because they're a part of the community from which we've drawn our greatest strength. To visit our Lest We Forget page, just click this link:

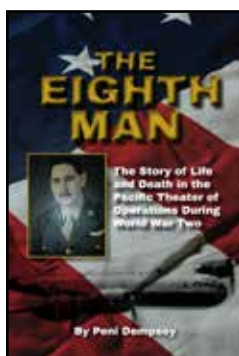
<https://www.awon2.org/remembrances/forget.html>

or go to the AWON website - it can be found under the heading, "Remembrances".

If you have a remembrance to add to our "Lest We Forget" page, please contact either Kristin Holmes at atomicsagebrush@gmail.com or Rik Peirson at Rik@dayone.com so we can be sure to memorialize every member of our beloved AWON family whom we have lost.



A NEW Book from an AWON Orphan! *The Eighth Man* - by Peni Dempsey (Yazzie)



My father and the entire crew of a B-29b named the Manuiwa were lost over Kawasaki, Japan, in July 1945. Growing up without a Daddy was hard because no one wanted to talk to me about him. This is the story of 41 years of research to find out who Daddy was, how he died, and the years of turmoil my family endured afterward - Peni Dempsey (Yazzie)

Buy it on Amazon: [The Eighth Man: The Story of Life and Death in the Pacific Theater of Operations During WWII](#)



AWON Moments by AWON President Walter Linne

The mission of our AWON Moments series is to review AWON History, celebrating special moments experienced by AWON members since Ann Bennett Mix founded the organization in 1991.

From American Orphans Newsletter Issue #56, March 2010 – AWON Joins ‘Spirit of ‘45’ to Remember End of WWII: AWON is proud to be a Founding Partner in a nationwide campaign to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the end of WWII and is encouraging AWON members to participate in its local and national events. ‘Spirit of ‘45’ is a year-long effort to thank WWII veterans and to inspire national service.

Issue #57, June 2020 – Brokaw Book Ends Years of Grief: Brokaw’s book changed my life forever. It contained letters and reflections from other people to whom I could finally relate. These sons, daughters, sweethearts, spouses, and parents shared their real-life experiences and suddenly, I knew why I had buried my feelings all these years. All my life, I had never known another child or family that had a similar experience. It was painful to read, and it took several months to finish. *Note: This excerpt was submitted by Sondra Braddy Davis, whose Father never knew of her birth.*

Issue #58, September 2010 – Mom: Our Other Hero: I cannot fathom her loneliness for a mate or need for a partner in making decisions, but to her dying days she remained faithful and dedicated to the marriage vows between her and our Father. Our years as youths were great but of course as kids we challenged the adults in our lives and presented many challenges to our Mom. She was great, always fair, had an exceptional insight and understood that if we were to learn to walk, we would have to take a few tumbles, and tumble we did. But there was never a doubt that she would be there to help pick up the pieces and encourage us on our way. Her strength still amazes me. She died a few years back. She chose to have her ashes placed in the Pacific so that she could once again join our Father who died over sixty years earlier in the Pacific and was never recovered. *Excerpt contributed by Duane Ticknor.*

Issue #59, December 2012 – AWON Mourns Dedicated Friend: Every WWII orphan has a sister. Her name is Doni. Doni Morrison Troglia – our AWON sister – passed away October 2010. If you didn’t know Doni personally, you probably heard about her, and you definitely were touched by her. Doni’s fingertips on AWON are everywhere. She was a board director secretary, Vice President, database manager, long time editor of *The Star* and co-editor of the award-winning Turner publication *American WWII Orphans Network*. She mediated disagreements with grace, and always offered a hand to someone who needed it. There is no other person who personified AWON like Doni did.

Issue #60, March 2011 – Penn. AWONers to Hold Annual Lunch in April: AWONers in Pennsylvania and surrounding states will hold their annual gathering in York, Pennsylvania, on Saturday April 9. "It is time to socialize with our friends, talk about our fathers and enjoy our lunch," explains Pennsylvania Regional Coordinator Lynn Lecrone.

Unforgettable AWON Moment – AWONer Meets Schoolchildren Who Adopted Father’s Grave: On the AWON Memorial Day overseas trip AWONer Joseph Lippi had the pleasure in meeting students in Liege, Belgium, who have adopted his father’s grave at Henri-Chapelle. Teacher Michael Lorquet and his students found Lippi after finding Lippi’s Tribute to his father on the AWON website.

Please send your AWON Moments to:

AWON STAR
5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216
Or email to president@awon.org

Walter Linne, brother of John
Sons of Walter John Linne
KIA March 24, 1945
Germersheim-on-the-Rhine, Germany

AWON Meetups are BACK!!!



After a VERY LONG time where we were all struggling with missing our friends and family due to Covid-19, we here at THE STAR are so thrilled to be able to share more AWON meetup photos with you!!

In January 2023, Chickie & Bob Berry and Dick & Pat Albani shared lunch at PF Chang's in Henderson, NV. Many thanks to Pat Albani for sending this great photo! We LOVE it!

In May 2023, Gloria Layne met up with Sam Tannenbaum in Kissimmee, FL.

Do you have an AWON meetup to share? Please send them to STAR editor Kristin Holmes at atomicsagebrush@gmail.com

Thank you and enjoy that time with your AWON siblings!



Coming SOON - the Greatest Generation Commemorative Coin



Did you know that the National WWII Memorial is almost twenty?

As war orphan Geraldine Conway Morenski, daughter of CPL David Leonard Conway, wrote in her wonderful article for **The Haverhill Gazette**, [WWII Memorial Needs Our Help](#), "The Memorial now is in need of critical repairs and maintenance. The National Park Service, which oversees the maintenance of the Memorial, has an estimated \$12 billion backlog – approximately \$1 billion allocated for the National Mall alone. Repairs and maintenance to the Memorial, which are needed, are not highest on the priority list."

Gerry continued, "Dedicated in 2004, the Memorial honors the 16 million who served in the Armed Forces of the U.S. during World War II, the more than 400,000 who died, and the millions who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th Century, the Memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and to peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world."

We all know the National WWII Memorial is important, and we know there's not enough money to go around. But what you may not know is that there is a solution right around the corner.

According to the Friends of the National WWII Memorial Website, in the spring of 2021, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and Congressman Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) introduced the Greatest Generation Commemorative Coin Act (H.R. 1057), authorizing the U.S. Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.

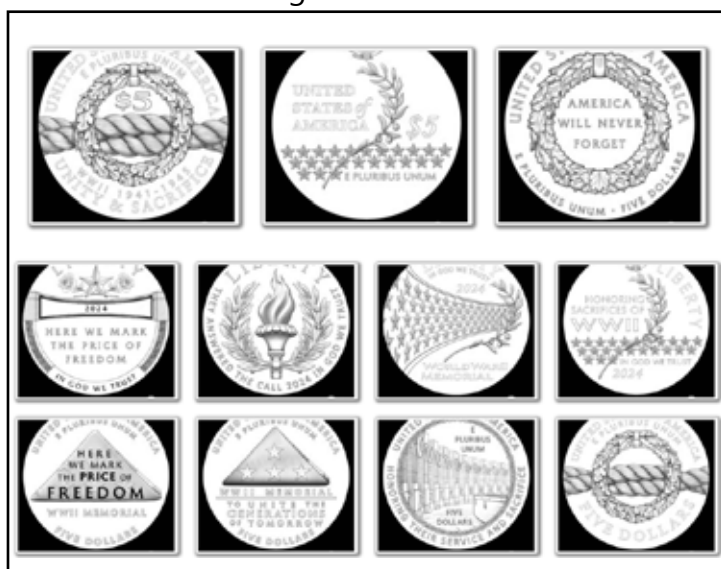
Proceeds from the sale of the commemorative coins will be used to repair and maintain the Memorial, as well as for commemorative and educational programming. With 302 cosponsors, the bill passed by a House voice vote on July 26, 2022. In the United States

Senate, Senators Mike Rounds (R-SD) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) introduced a companion bill, the Greatest Generation Commemorative Coin Act (S.1596). With 89 cosponsors, the bill passed by a Senate voice vote on July 27, 2022.

On August 3, 2022, President Joe Biden signed the Greatest Generation Commemorative Coin Act into Law. Public Law No: 117-162 directs the U.S. Treasury to mint coins in January 2024 and will allow repairs to begin at the WWII Memorial soon after. This legislation calls for the production and sale in Proof and Uncirculated versions of up to 50,000 gold \$5 coins, 400,000 silver dollars and 750,000 copper-nickel clad half dollars. Beginning in 2024, the coins will be sold to the public at face value plus a \$35, \$10, and \$5 surcharge, respectively, to fund the work led by the Friends of the National World War II Memorial.

On April 18, 2023, The US Commission of Fine Arts, an independent government entity in charge of reviewing and authorizing aesthetic elements in the Federal government, recommended proposed designs for the three-coin (\$5 coin, \$1 coin, and 50 cent piece) Greatest Generation commemorative coin program. You can see the proposed designs below.

Friends of the National World War II Memorial Executive Director Holly Rotondi put it eloquently, "The commemorative coin will serve as an important representation of the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the brave Americans who fought to defend the nation and advance peace and freedom throughout the world."



Buried on the Battlefield? Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead of WWII - A Review

By Everett Roberts

Hello Fellow AWONers - I want to put a shout out to you all, as I noticed a really good book you might enjoy. The name of the book is *Buried on the Battlefield? Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead of WWII* by William L. Beigel.

The book is a very interesting look at the history of bringing back the American WWII dead from overseas. Told through family letters, official documents, historical research, magazine and newspaper articles, and photographs, *Buried on the Battlefield? Not My Boy* describes the recovery of the remains of over 280,000 fallen American soldiers. Fallen soldiers were removed from foreign graves, often temporary or makeshift, across the globe and properly buried in military cemeteries overseas, or returned to their homelands.

The United States was the only nation to bring home their war dead. This was unprecedented at the time, and some of our allies in WWII were strongly against the idea because they feared their own citizens would demand the same of their governments. But it was done because American families demanded it.

Buried on the Battlefield? Not My Boy is a story that needed to be written. Even though I am a war orphan, I personally didn't know that we are the only nation that repatriates remains. It is a revelation worth noting and that was so many years ago and how things have changed since then with our hiding what war is really like and honoring those who gave all for their country.

Of further interest to AWON members regards the book's author, Bill Beigel. In my eyes, he is an authority on WWII research. He offers World War II casualty, veteran, and military unit records research for those who cannot do the research for themselves. He's researched over 1,000 individuals

and many different mass casualty events from WWII.

Years back when I did a lot of research on my father, Everett NMI Roberts, Bill Beigel was a great help.

My dad, Pvt. Everett Roberts, was a replacement for F Company 310 Inf 78 Div at Remagen, and joined them as a replacement from Italy on 12 March, 1945. He reported for duty with twelve other replacements and by noon that day only three men in the platoon were left, all killed or wounded. He was killed at Ohlendorf, just the other side of Remagen Bridge, along with many others at Kreuzhauf Crossing.

My contact with Bill Beigel led me to learn what happened that day from my father's platoon officer, Lt Hinchley, and others in the platoon. He also helped me in getting from St. Louis, repository pages scorched and incomplete due to the fire they'd had there. I received from him 5 sections of information that I never had, including my mother's death certificate in Feb 1947, before they brought back my father from Belgium in 1947 and buried him in Cobleskill, NY. When he was brought back he is part of Bill Beigel's book which tells the story. I'm proud to have *Buried on the Battlefield? Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead of WWII* as part of my collection now as it tells the real story of Americans killed overseas.

This information I got from Bill was so important to me, as I never had anything to go on. Even after spending 12 years stationed in Germany before and after my tours in SEA, I never visited the Bridge at Remagen or the memorials there.

Once I had this information, I took a 3 month leave from the 2nd Ranger Battalion at JBLM after my 30 years as intel analyst/cryptographer/communications in the USMC and USAF. As I was preparing to retire, I had more leave time. I was only miles away from the site of my father's death, because my in laws lived in Pforzheim, Ulm, Veilchenweg, and Munich. We spent several days in Remagen at the Memorial, across the way from Ohlendorf and Kretzhaus Crossing.



The special case containing the history and medals of PVT Everett Roberts, father of AWON member Everett Roberts.

Author and researcher William Beigel was invaluable in Everett finding out more information about his dad.

Then we went to Berlin with visits to family for a week, then to Austria, which was my wife's home after they left Croatia in 1944. It was a trip that will always mean to me the culmination of many years of patience.

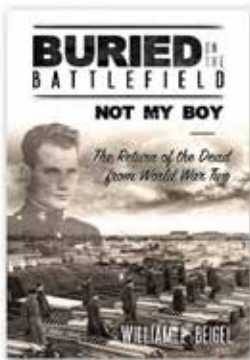
Bill Beigel is currently doing research for me on my father's twin brother who served in the Signal Corps in the Pacific. My cousin never knew about medals my uncle should have gotten, never knew about his

father's history or even that he could be put into the WWII memorial in Washington DC - which I did for him. I am currently waiting on the history and the medals which I will put in a special case, like I did with my father's medals.

One thing I learned from my fellow veterans is that we let each other know how things work. I recently was diagnosed with MDS, a disease linked to my service at Camp LeJeune during the 1950's. Once I was 100% disabled I learned about things like HISA, Aid and Assistance, a letter from the VA that listed exactly my disability so it couldn't be disputed. I have a good friend who was 100% disabled with Parkinsons and he didn't know about HISA, Aid and Assistance. Word of mouth is good but word of what can be done now must be gotten to people so they know.

Thanks to William L. Beigel for writing a great book, for doing the research into my father's story, and giving me the pages I would never have gotten from the archives. The story of my father's death was a story of a few men, but it touched not only those twenty lives but thousands more, such as mine.

Semper fi.



If you're interested in reading William Beigel's book, *Buried on the Battlefield: Not My Boy: The Return of the Dead of WWII* is available here:

<https://www.ww2research.com/buried-on-the-battlefield/>

Author and researcher William Beigel also has a very interesting personal webpage that was full of fascinating and heartwarming stories:

<https://www.ww2research.com/>

He is also available to hire to assist with research - if you have hit a wall with your research into your father's life, it might be a way to continue your search. This is not an official endorsement, just bringing it to your attention in case it is of benefit to anyone.

Were you affected by the 1973 St. Louis Archives Fire? The National Archives recently hosted their 2023 National Archives Genealogy Series, and a special program dedicated to the archive fire was created featuring archives specialist Eric Kilgore. The NA has made this presentation available free of charge to the public on You Tube: <https://youtu.be/ecNS91LD5mE>

Description: The catastrophic fire at the National Personnel Records Center in 1973 destroyed millions of military personnel records and presents a variety of challenges for researchers. This presentation will examine the fire, record losses, and common myths, and will provide guidance on how to research the records of veterans affected by the fire. Part of overcoming these challenges is knowing about other records that are available to supplement information lost in the fire. This presentation will highlight those record series at the National Archives at St. Louis and their usefulness for unlocking information from the past.

AWON Board of Directors Board Meeting Report - Jan. 22, 2023

A Question For the Editor -

Why is the US Department of Veterans Affairs Changing its Motto?

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM EST by President Walt Linne.

Present - Lorin McCleary - LM, Walt Linne - WL, Bob Meek - BM, Rik Peirson - RP, Judi Kramer - JK, Bob Holliday - BH, Roberta Nolan - RN, Ken Underwood - KU, Bonnie Hellums - BH. Excused: Ann Mix. Kristin Holmes absent due to illness.

WL: Opened the meeting and introduced and welcomed our new Board Members, Dr Roberta Nolan, Ken Underwood and Judge Bonnie Hellums. Walt announced that both Barry Barr-Finch, Facebook Coordinator, and Gloria Layne, Associate Organization Coordinator have agreed to continue in their positions and attend Board meetings as appropriate.

LM: Reviewed membership stats and stated Barb George has been very helpful in contacting members whose memberships have lapsed with much success. LM stated that he would stay on as Secretary but relinquishes the Recorder position.

BM: Reported that the 2023 budget is in place and the finances are in good shape. He stated that he would stay on as Treasurer.

BH: States that there is still work in convincing the American Battle Monument Commission, ABMC, to reinstate the Flower Program and thanked everyone for their help.

WL: States that the Membership needs to be reinvigorated and the need to establish specific guidelines for the committee to follow. More discussion needed.

BM: Stated that Amazon has dropped the program that awards non-profits funds that have been designated for their use.

RP: States the AWON Website is always up for review. If you note any problems or have any questions, please contact him.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 7:30PM.

Recently on Facebook, AWON Members were discussing a recent change to the slogan of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Originally, the VA's slogan was this quote from Abraham Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural Address: **"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."** This quote was adopted 64 years ago and was featured on over half of all Dept. of Veterans Affairs buildings. But the VA has decided to change their slogan to: **"To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers and survivors."**

Why was the slogan changed? Critics of the original VA slogan argued that it was disrespectful to female veterans and appeared to cut parents and extended family members out entirely - even though in many cases it was parents, grandparents, and siblings, not widows and children, providing care and ongoing support for wounded veterans.

It is hoped that this more-inclusive new mission statement recognizes and honors all veterans, regardless of their sex. Further, recognition of the sacrifices of all military families, including spouses and children, but not limited to them alone, who have lost a service member or are providing care for a wounded soldier, is long overdue. The VA stands ready to help support the families of those who have served their country - even if they're not wives and children.

So there we have it! The motto of the Veteran's Administration is being changed in order to better reflect the existence of female veterans and to provide acknowledgement and support for the extended families of veterans.

AWON Receives French Invitation to Participate

AWON recently received a very gracious invitation to participate in the dedication of a memorial to a fallen American soldier killed while liberating a French village:

Please find attached an invitation from the Mayor of Velesmes-Essarts (Doubs, France) inviting you to participate in the inauguration ceremony of the stele dedicated to American soldier John J. Harmich, killed at the age of 20, on September 8, 1944, by liberating our village, with the 1st Battalion of the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the 36th DIUS.

Even if you can't come, I want you to be informed of this inauguration.

With my best feelings

François FAVORY

Below: The memorial stele dedicated to the memory of John J. Harmich, killed Sept. 8, 1944, while liberating the village of Velesmes-Essarts, France. The people of France still remember the sacrifice these young men made.



We were deeply honored and sent the following response:

François,

Thank you for the invitation. Please tell the Mayor that unfortunately I will not be able to attend. And, thank him and the people of Dobbs for their recognition for our young soldier John Harmich.

I will have the invitation posted in our newsletter THE STAR to show our American WWII Orphans the wonderful deed the the people of Doubs have done for our young soldier.

In his memory and all those that gave their life for freedom in WWII.

*Walt Linne
AWON President*

AWON EOM Account Totals as of June 30, 2023

AWON 2023 EOM Account Totals					
Treasurer Report as of 6/30/2023					
	General (Wreath)	Conference	Book Source	Money Market	Comment
JANUARY	\$24,843.19 (\$7,981.26)	\$1,553.53	\$416.38	\$48,078.92	Note: The General Fund includes (Wreath Fund) deposits.
FEBRUARY	\$22,710.95 (\$8,056.26)	\$1,553.53	\$1,409.58	\$48,079.29	
MARCH	\$22,710.95 (\$8,258.26)	\$1,533.53	\$1,409.58	\$48,079.69	
APRIL	\$23,875.89 (\$8,916.26)	\$1,533.53	\$1,418.24	\$48,080.09	
MAY	\$24,294.25 (\$9,386.26)	\$1,533.53	\$1,399.74	\$48,080.50	
JUNE	\$24,479.63 (\$9,700.59)	\$1,533.53	\$1,399.74	\$48,088.44	
JULY					

Liberation Pavillion at the National WWII Museum Grand Opening

Exciting news is coming from the the National WWII Museum in New Orleans!

The National WWII Museum will be opening its final permanent exhibit hall, Liberation Pavillion, on November 3, 2023. Liberation Pavillion will feature exhibits about the end of WWII, the Holocaust, the postwar years, and how the war continues to impact our lives today. Two floors of exhibit space featuring first person accounts, artifacts, and immersive environments will tell these stories. There is also a new theater opening on the third floor.

Special features on the first floor include the Anne Frank Story and how Holocaust survivors were liberated by US forces, the importance of faith in wartime on the homefront and on the battlefield, and the tale of how the Monuments Men worked against time to salvage precious works of art.

On the second floor, there are extensive exhibits dedicated to the postwar period, where the impact of the war is explored. The rebuilding of a world destroyed, the war crimes trials, the emergence of the US as a world superpower, technological innovations based on wartime technology, and the war's impact on foreign relations are all explored. There is an interactive gallery where museum visitors can voice their thoughts on the war's legacy - a subject about which AWON members would undoubtedly add valuable insight.

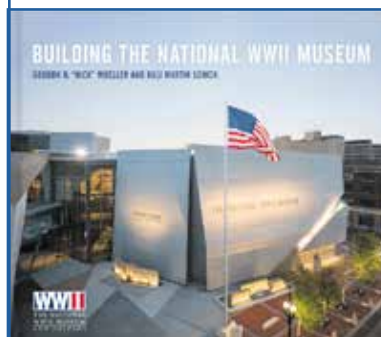
On the third floor will be the Foundation Freedom Theater, which the museum hopes "will help ensure that the stories of World War II remain relevant for future generations." This interactive exhibit will highlight efforts to protect and promote freedom during and after World War II, and the nation's role in the postwar global order. Center stage will be the importance and fragility of freedom, making it clear why the sacrifices of World War II remain profoundly relevant today.

Robert Priddy, the largest donor to Liberation Pavillion, put it this way: "We believe that the Greatest Generation embodies American strength and values, and we are committed to supporting the Museum in their efforts to recognize the sacrifices of this generation and to inspire all people to embrace the lessons of this global conflict. We hope that the central theme of human freedom and the exploration of 'what World War II means today' will inspire all who see it to reflect on the meaning of freedom and their role in preserving it."

According to the National WWII Museum, one of the main functions of Liberation Pavillion is to honor the sacrifices of the WWII generation. It is only fitting that AWON's Victory Paver is located in the Col. Battle Barksdale Parade Ground directly in front of the building dedicated to exploring the immense costs of war.

AWON hopes to have some of its members present at the opening. More information will be forthcoming to help members in planning a trip!

Building the National WWII Museum is available for pre-order! Get your signed copy today!



Building The National WWII Museum, by Gordon "Nick" Mueller and Kali Martin Schick tells the story of the Museum's remarkable progress, from its early days as The National

D-Day Museum to the unveiling of the Museum's final section, the Liberation Pavilion, in November 2023. The signed book is available for pre-order now and will be shipped to you in October 2023. Order here: <https://store.nationalww2museum.org/building-the-national-wwii-museum-hc-signed-copy/>

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. _____

Please send your check:

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

AWON Treasurer
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216

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 \$10 a year – includes an E-version of **The Star**, and \$25 a year – includes a printed version.

Supporting Member Dues are \$50 a year – includes either version of **The Star**.

Membership Dues Levels:

Please circle your Dues Level below:

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Orphan	\$25	\$48	\$70
Family (E-Star Version)	\$10	\$20	\$30
Family (Printed Star Version)	\$25	\$48	\$70
Supporting	\$50	\$96	\$140
Gold Star (Increased Donation)	\$100	\$192	\$280

Donation Considerations:

Memorial Day Wreath Fund \$ _____
 General Operations & Outreach \$ _____
 Total Dues & Donations Enclosed \$ _____



Submittable
 Online >>>



AWON (American WWII Orphans Network) is a humanitarian, non-profit, nonpolitical service organization under Section 501(c)3 of the US Federal Tax Code. (EINB #91-1538912) Membership is not required to be entered into the Database. For more information, the AWON Website is at www.awon.org.



AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form

Books

Authors in **BOLD** are orphan or family members

Items marked with (*) include P&H

_____ <i>Pieces of Us</i>	
By Janice Crandell Powers	\$20.00*
_____ <i>A Daughter's Quest: Retracing My Father's Footsteps During World War II</i>	
By Laura Smail Sims	\$16.95
_____ <i>The Gun Club: U.S.S. Duncan at Cape Esperance</i>	
By Robert Fowler	\$15.99
_____ <i>Collateral Damage, A World War II Orphan: Lost and Found</i>	
By Reda Reynolds	\$9.00
_____ <i>Feisty: Chronicles & Confessions of an Old PR Warhorse</i>	
By Joe Finnigan	\$12.99
_____ <i>A Bit of Earth</i>	
By Wendy Crisp Lestina	\$13.95
_____ <i>K.I.A.: An Orphan's Search for His Father Through the Fog of War</i>	
By Patrick Audinet	\$10.00*
_____ <i>All proceeds from Audinet book benefit AWON</i>	
_____ <i>The Beauty of What Remains: Family Lost, Family Found</i>	
By Susan Johnson Hadler	\$15.00*
_____ <i>In Search of a Pilot: Hanford "Rusty" J. Rustand</i>	
By Marilyn Rustand Lieurance	\$7.00*
_____ <i>My Father: More than a Picture, a Beer Bottle and a Flag</i>	
By Jerry W. Pinkerton	\$12.00*
_____ <i>The Lost Submarine: A True Story of Love and War</i>	
By Nancy Kenney	\$16.00
_____ <i>"Daddy's Gone to War": The Second World War in the lives of America's Children</i>	
By William M. Tuttle Jr., PhD	\$30.00
_____ <i>In My Father's Words: Letters From a WWII Soldier</i>	
By Bill McElvain	\$16.00
_____ <i>Farebersville 1944</i>	
By Jeff Wignall	\$18.95
_____ <i>A Soldier's Daughter</i>	
By Lois Brown Klein	\$17.00
_____ <i>The Ordinary Infantrymen: Heroes Then, Heroes Again</i>	
By Imogene Woods and Twelve WWII Infantrymen	\$15.00
_____ <i>Full Fathom Five: A Daughter's Search</i>	
By Mary Lee Coe Fowler	\$29.95

_____ <i>Love Always, Ben</i>		
By Huey Tyra, nephew	Reduced!	\$2.00
_____ <i>Sporty Course (bomber pilots)</i>		
By Col. Jack Swayze		\$10.00
_____ <i>The Hotton Report (About the Battle For Hotton)</i>		
By Robert McDonald		\$13.95
_____ <i>World War II: A Legacy of Letters-One Soldier's Journey</i>		
By Clinton Frederick		\$26.95
_____ <i>An 8th Airforce Combat Diary</i>		
By John A. Clark		\$49.95
_____ <i>When I See a "Forty and Eight"... I Remember World War II</i>		
By Lt. Col. Jacques Adnet USAF (ret.)	Reduced!	\$5.00!
_____ <i>In Their Memory: American WWII Orphan's Network</i>		
By Turner Publishing Company		
Was 49.95	Reduced	\$10.00
_____ <i>The Fighting Tigers: The Untold Story Behind the Names on The Quachita Baptist University WWII Memorial</i>		
By William Downes		\$24.95
_____ <i>The War Journey of Major Damon "Rocky" Gause</i>		
Forward by Damon L. Gause		\$21.95
_____ <i>No Greater Sacrifice, No Greater Love: A Son's Journey to Normandy</i>		
By Walter Ford Carter	Reduced!	\$18.00
_____ <i>D-Day + 60 Years: A Small Piece of Airborne History</i>		
By Jerome J. McLaughline		\$25.00
_____ <i>They Also Served: Women's Stories From the WWII Era</i>		
By Jeanie Sutton Lambright		
New Price!	Hardcover	Softcover
	\$20.00	\$10.00
_____ <i>Finding Billy</i>		
By Diana Thompson Dale, niece		\$16.95
_____ <i>Father Found: Life and Death as a Prisoner of the Japanese In WWII</i>		
By Duane Heisinger		\$13.95
_____ <i>Shobun: A Forgotten War Crime in the Pacific</i>		
By Michael J. Goodwin		\$19.95

AWON BOOKSTORE

Price List / Order Form

CD/DVD



___ *Leather and Strings*

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

___ *Letters of Love and War* (CD for Mac or PC)

By 1LT John and Betty Peirson \$19.44

___ *AWON 2004 Conference & WWII Memorial Dedication* (VHS)

Reduced!! Was \$5.00 \$3.00*

___ *We Speak Their Names: A Tribute to Our Fathers* (VHS)
produced by Patrick Tierney and **Terry Boettcher**

Reduced! was \$15.00 now \$3.00

___ *AWON 2000 Conference Journeys - Finding Our Fathers* (VHS)

by Justin Taylan was \$15.00 \$3.00*

___ *Sleep My Sons: The Story of the Arisan Maru*

by Shawnee Brittan Reduced! was \$30.00 \$20.00*

AWON Logo Products

Closeout on the Following AWON merchandise

___ AWON Hat \$15.00

___ Scarf (royal blue fleece - only 3 left!!) \$10.00

___ 20th Anniversary Tote Bag (small)
REDUCED! \$5.00

___ Tote Bag (large) \$10.00

___ 20th Anniversary Garden Flag (without holder) \$10.00

___ *AWON Holiday Ornament \$10.00

___ *AWON lapel pin \$10.00

___ *AWON Button 2 1/4" \$3.00

___ *AWON Lanyard w/ nametag and ticket holder (blue with white lettering, 4"x6"holder) \$6.00

___ *AWON notecards & envelopes (pkg of 20) (Only 2 left!!) \$20.00

___ *AWON bookmarks

Circle amount: 1 for \$1.00 5 for \$3.00 10 for \$5.00

The Star Newsletters

___ *Individual issues: \$4.00 - Includes P&H

___ *All archived issues: \$40.00 - Includes P&H

___ *Special!! Most recent five issues: \$15.00 Inc. P&H

Ordering Information

Postage and handling: \$8 for each item. Items marked with an asterisk (*) include postage and handling.

For multiple purchases: Up to \$40 - \$10 P&H \$40-\$60 - \$12 P&H \$60 and up - \$15 P&H

Washington State residents please add 7.8% sales tax

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

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

EMAIL: _____

Total Enclosed (check/money order payable to AWON): _____

Send check or money order to:

AWON Bookstore

5745 Lee Road

Indianapolis, IN

46216

email: bookstore@awon.org

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JH Geiger Operations Center
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216

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The Star

"Breaking Down the Wall of Silence"

AWON Headquarters
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
www.awon.org



AWON Mission

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

AWON Directory

Address Corrections

Lorin McCleary ldmccleary@gmail.com

Archives OPEN POSITION

Bookstore

Walt Linne bookstore@awon.org

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**Friends of the National
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MeWe

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Membership

OPEN POSITION

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Jeanne Rhinehart hart1003@comcast.net

Rik Peirson rik@dayone.com

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