



Year 9 | Number 1 | Mission Belle Foundation

## *Introduction*

Before you another newsletter of the Mission Belle Foundation. We like to involve you with the monument at the Lek dike in Nieuw-Lekkerland. A place that reminds us every day what happened during World War 2 and to this day we remember the deceased soldiers.

Thanks for your involvement and support! It will help us to keep on telling the story of the Mission Belle and to pass it on to the younger generations!

A greeting in brotherhood and solidarity,

André Hoogendoorn, chairman

Heleen Stam, secretary

Cor Brand

Piet Vat

Pieter van de Minkelis

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## Remembrance November 29th, 2025

On Saturday, November 29th, at 13:30 o'clock, the yearly remembrance took place at the monument on the Lek dike. It was a worthy and beautiful moment, and it was good to do this together

The chairman, André Hoogendoorn, welcomed everyone, and after that, the mayor T. Segers held a speech and finished it by laying a wreath. Afterwards, pupils from the School with the Bible from Streefkerk, contributed by laying a wreath at the monument. Two pupils read a poem. They were given a certificate for taking care of the monument this year. The meditation was given by the Army Pastor reverend G. van Driesten.

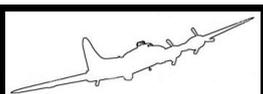
The re-enactment group was also there and gave a valuable contribution by their presence in full costume and for the salutes and raising the flag.

Because 'The Green Virus' was there, the remembrance got a special addition. The military vehicles were impressive to see and some children could ride along. The musical accompaniment was done by the ensemble of Apollo.

As board we are grateful for this beautiful and valuable moment, and are ending it with the words reverend Van Driesten:

*They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
we will remember them.*

Many people from the neighborhood were there. Participation of schoolchildren made us realize that we are also doing this to keep the remembrance for future generations alive.





## Participation schools

Last year, we have given a presentation at some primary schools about the *Mission Belle*. We were happy and surprised to see how the history of the *Mission Belle* was given a place at schools and even whole projects were made.

Very great to see!

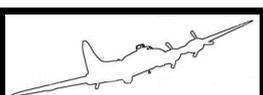
For an impression, see the photo's nearby.



## Christmas Eve

On Christmas Eve, some members of the board lit three candles to remember and honor the three members of the crew who passed away: Harland V. Sunde, Doyle C. McCutchen and John A. Healey.

Later that night about ten more candles were placed. We don't know by who, but it was very beautiful to see, because it tells us show this history is still alive in society.



## Heightened: ‘Lack of Moral Fiber’

Lack of Moral Fiber, also curtailed as LMF, was a term that became known during the first years of World War 2 and was used within the RAF (Royal Air Force).

In this article I’d like to reflect what was meant by it and why this term was introduced, and for a pretty long time was used within the RAF.

The psychological courage and stamina of these young airmen must have been incredibly great. If we try to imagine what it meant for them to, during that time and to operate in these circumstances, we can’t impossibly value what these (mostly young) men have done for the freedom of other countries like The Netherlands.

Here are some facts:

- Within the RAF, Bomber Command almost lost 50% of the crews through fights, accidents or imprisonment. It involved about 57.000 of the 125.000 men.
- The American Eight Air Force (where also the Mission Belle was a part of it) lost also tens of thousands of their men, including 26.000 deceased in three years time. Of the 36.000 prisoners of war of the US Air Force, 72 percent came from the 8th Air Force.

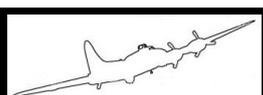
Survival was hardly self-evident. Indeed, the chance to lose your life or become prisoner of war was very high. From the moment that the men stepped into the plane, danger was always there and almost concrete. German pilots came so close, that they could see each other literally in the eyes. The anti-aircraft guns were terrible and enemy planes could come ‘out of nowhere’.

Besides the ongoing danger, the impact of the bombing targets on the crews must have been burdensome as well. From 1942, British Bomber Command got permission to bomb German cities, and later the Americans as well. This drastic attempt to stop the German war machine, made a lot of damage in Germany and about 600.000 burgers lost their lives. But also on allied side a huge price was paid for this. It was not so mind-boggling that the men had problems with the psychological effects of everything they experienced. They were exhausted, disillusioned and psychically very battered. This is what we call posttraumatic stress now, but was then battle fatigue. Some military became mad. These men very very fearful and refused to fly any more.

Then the terrible term ‘Lack of Moral Fiber’ (LMF) was introduced. It was claimed that they had no willpower, courage or moral. The psychiatry in that period assumed that some people were hereditary sensitive for mental collapse. The military involved were often transferred quickly to prevent that they could have a negative influence on the moral of the other crews. Everything was aimed to get the men in the air as quickly as possible.



The damage to the planes was visible, but the psychological damage tot the crews was ignored. Photo: NARA 204842668



Eventually, the military leadership could no longer deny that the psychic pressures were so high and that this was not a sign of personal weakness. They established a maximum of 25 flights, psychiatrists were available and a part of the men could get some rest in the so-called Flak Houses or Rest Homes, where they stayed in a homely atmosphere, before they should fly again. But practically this worked in reverse: because the men shared their experiences with each other, the fear to return to the war machine was often bigger.

Men who were labeled LMF (although this was not an official medical diagnosis) were often treated shamefully. There are cases known where men who showed their so-called “cowardice”, were publically removed from their military rank, meant as a deterrent example. The fear to be classified with LMF, was very profound: it didn't just mean removal from military service, but also a permanent annotation to their record of service, what could influence their further life in an adverse way.

As an example below, a fragment from an interview with Charles Green, who remembered an air gunner refusing to fly again, after he was shot by a night fighter:

*“...this air gunner came in and he was ruddy crying. Absolutely crying. A bloke, you know. And he was trembling all over and he was saying, ‘never again. I’m not going, never again. Never again.’ ... Everybody was talking about it... Then one day we were called out on parade... Everybody on the parade ground. Everybody. And they marched this lad out, air gunner, and stripped him of his... he’d been court-martialed ‘cause he wouldn’t fly again. And they stripped his tapes off and his brevet off and everything... they were that ruddy cruel. But I know they marched him off and that was it.”*

In total there were probably several thousands of men who were classified with the term Lack of Moral Fiber. It must have been shameful and humiliating for those who were involved. The term LMF was used by the RAF until the 1960's.

We should be grateful that nowadays there is a lot more attention for the psychological pressure on military. In my opinion, all the crew members who have been deployed for our freedom, should get our permanent appreciation – especially when you see the remaining damage caused by many of them .

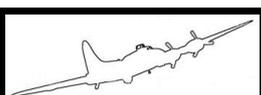
*Pieter van de Minkelis*



American flyers are relaxing in a Rest Home. In research was found out that these so called Flak Houses increased the fear for flying even more. Photo: NARA 204885853.



Sergeant Thomas M. Barber kneels before the altar of the 96th Bombardment Group chapel, shortly before a new mission. Photo: NARA 204885853.



## Agenda 2026:

*May 4th and 5th* | On both days there will be a flag ceremony at the monument on the Lek dike. On May 4th, at 10:00 in the morning, a floral arrangement will be laid. The board will be there as well.

*May 26th* | Also on May 26th, Memorial Day, there will be a flag ceremony, when in the morning at 11:45 in the morning, a floral arrangement will be laid.

*November 28th* | On November 28th, the yearly remembrance will be held at the monument, to remember and honor the Mission Belle crew. This remembrance starts at 13:30 in the afternoon at the monument. Because we should never forget.



More information about the above mentioned dates will be communicated through the well known channels.

## Become a friend:

For the maintenance of the monument there will be some costs, You could help us to manage these costs by becoming a friend of the Mission Belle B-17G. You will be a friend with a yearly contribution of at least € 15,-. You will receive twice a year a newsletter and a invitation for the yearly remembrance. You can enlist as a friend via: [secretariaat@missionbelle.nl](mailto:secretariaat@missionbelle.nl).

## Mission Belle Book:

For sale: the third print of our book 'We knew it would be a long day', including a lot of new information.

The book will cost € 14,95, mailing excluded. In this third print, the history is in a readable story, tied with the actuality of the monument and the importance to remind and remember. For ths, the following chapters have been added; we have to do something with it, the unveiling of the monument, remembrance in perspective and 80 years after the emergency landing. There are also some additions and corrections made with the previous editions.

The book is, of course, created with a lot of photo's, so that many of the people who were at the unveiling in 2018 or the remembrance in 2023, will see themselves or others back in this book.

## Action:

When you decide to become a friend of the foundation and are interested in this fine book, we can offer you the book with a membership for a year for € 25,00 (mailing excluded).

Send an e-mail to: [secretariaat@missionbelle.nl](mailto:secretariaat@missionbelle.nl)

