



Josephson Family: Brian & Christine Runnels, Paul & Cyndy Josephson, Jenny & Brad Brush



Sergeant Carlton Arthur Josephson



The Flying Fortress B17 Bomber. 12,500 produced.

travel tales

# MEMORIAL OF THE MISSION BELLE

## Heroes Forever Remembered

By Jennifer Hines

Hollytree residents Paul and Cyndy Josephson recently celebrated their 50th anniversary with a river cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam. They were joined by their daughters and their husbands. The family all then traveled to Lekkerkirk and Nieuw Lekkerland the last weekend in September for the dedication of a memorial to the crew of the Mission Belle. That is the B-17 Paul's father was on when he was shot down December 1, 1943. He survived the crash but was captured and spent about a year and a half as a Prisoner of War at Stalag 17B in Krems, Austria. Seventy-five years later, the local people wanted to honor them and the allies for all they had tried to do to help free them from German occupation. Paul's older cousin, Dick, his wife, and daughter were also there. In all, nine members of the Josephson clan were in attendance.

Paul says growing up, he would look at the diary his father had maintained during his captivity many times. This was a chapter in his father's life that was rarely mentioned. Paul never realized

the hell his father had gone through until one night when he was 22 years old, Paul and Cyndy had gone to see him for a visit. Around 8 o'clock that night Paul's dad started talking about his crash, capture, and imprisonment. Paul says they were up until almost 5 o'clock the next morning. "He just let it all out," Paul said, "There was no way Cyndy and I could not be at the dedication."

Paul was one of the speakers during the luncheon that weekend where he read a poem written by his granddaughter. There was also a memorial dedication, re-enactments, and a flyover. It was particularly impressive that they involved the young children in the dedication. Other participants included representatives of the U.S. and Dutch Air Force, a local orchestra and what looked like about 800 townspeople.

Paul said on the morning of the dedication, a member of the re-enactment group spoke and delivered a very profound state-



ment: "With freedom comes responsibility. We must never forget how our freedom was won." He went on to say that they realize the responsibility they have to keep the memories alive for the children so

that they grow up knowing that freedom is not free.

Paul went on to say that the Dutch take this responsibility seriously, which is why they involved children in the ceremony. During the dedication, two young boys placed a model of the plane they had made from scrap lumber at the base of the monument and a second-grade class has been assigned to maintain the grounds around the monument.

Another memorable moment occurred after the dedication. Paul said the local citizens approached the attendees and thanked the family members all profusely. Paul said they were trying to thank them for the wonderful memorial and all they had done, but they said, "you don't understand ... if it weren't for the allies, we would be part of Germany and we didn't want that."

Paul said the gratitude was also expressed to them by a citizen, who as a young boy saw the Mission Belle crash into the Lek River. He did not speak English, but his children translated for us. He insisted that they tell us, "many tears have been shed over the 75 years for the young Allies who fought for our freedom. Tears were shed not only on that fateful day but all these years since."

Sunday, the family went to the two cemeteries in which the three crew members who did not survive the crash are buried. In all, there were more than 37 family members from the States at the dedication.

Paul said, "It was a wonderful feeling seeing so many people honoring my father and the men of the Mission Belle. It was a weekend of smiles and tears. Seeing the respect and thankfulness the people of the Netherlands have for the Allies 75 years later is amazing. I've never been prouder to be his son!"

Here is the poem by Isabel Brush, waist gunner Carlton Josephson's great-granddaughter. Isabel was born four months after he died and



was 11 years old when she wrote the poem. Paul believes this poem sums up how they all feel about the men of the Mission Belle.

### My Soldier

I never knew my soldier,  
But I wish he was mine  
He was my great grandfather,  
It makes my mother cry

He did not die in war,  
But he got shot down  
He was captured and  
Brought to some strange town

He was starved and beat  
They treated him bad  
I have only heard stories,  
But it makes me feel so sad

My mother was thinking about  
Joining in, too,  
He wouldn't let her  
Cause of all he's been through

I never knew my soldier,  
I feel that he is mine  
He was good to all of us  
It makes my mother cry



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