

I thanked them for sharing their stories with me and encouraged them to share them with their families so they wouldn't be forgotten. At a 91st reunion in San Mateo, CA 2014, I was able to take my second flight in a particular B-17, but this time I would be taking the flight with some of the families of Dad's crew—a B-17 our loved ones had flown a mission in the famous NINE-O-NINE on a 9 October 1944 mission.

In 2015, I was able to plan a long-awaited trip to Luxembourg and for the first time visit my Dad's grave. I was honored to be invited to help place flags on the over 5,000 graves at the cemetery for the Memorial Day Ceremony taking place the following day at our American Battlefield Monuments Commission (ABMC) Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg. What a great honor and experience this was—and so emotional to actually be standing there at my Daddy's grave. I can't put into words what this meant to me. I had been designated to present a wreath in behalf of the American WWII Orphans Network (AWON) during the ceremony and was very honored to do this.

After the ceremony a group of members from the United States Veterans Friends, Luxembourg presented me with a large hardbound book telling the story of Luxembourg and how the Americans liberated them twice. They presented me with the Luxembourg Medal of Honor and a certificate to go with it. I believe this was a way of honoring my Dad and me for all the work I had done researching my Dad and reuniting families of his crew.

During this trip, I had a chance meeting with Patrick Murphy, Commander of the Civil Air Patrol Squadron in Spandahlem, Germany; and Founder/President of the WWII Battlefield Research and Preservation Group (WW2BRPG). "Murph", as we call him, and I soon learned we were both Treasure Hunters and had been to some of the same sites in both the U.K. and U.S.A. As we continued our conversation, I told him the only thing I had not done regarding my Dad was to find and go to the crash site, and Murph said he would help me get there.

In May of 2016, Murph emailed me from Libehna, Germany saying "Found the crash site. Limited time. When can you come?" A few days later I arrived in Luxembourg and both Murph and I drove 8 ½ hours to the small village of Libehna, Germany to see the crash site. Boy, that was tough and bittersweet. Even after more than 70 years, and corn in the field 4-5 inches high, with our trained eyes as Treasure Hunters, Murph and I could see where the body of the plane came to rest upon impact. I stood right there, within feet of where my Dad had laid next to his plane. It was a tough and emotional experience.

Over the next few days, we spoke with three people in the village who had actually gone to see the wreckage. They said they saw far more than they wanted to, including my Dad. While standing there in the field, I found a few pieces of Dad's plane and brought 6 fragments home. I had one fragment made into a pendant, with a B-17 and Dad's information edged into it and I proudly wear it every day.

A few days later, Murph and I were standing at the Wall of the Missing in Luxembourg, when he stated he was going to find one of the men whose name was on the wall, Michael Holowaty. I wanted to help and joined the WW2BRPG and have done the Stateside Research ever since.

Currently we have over 8,000 fragments of the plane and recently, after three years of searching, I have finally found the maintenance records that are crucial to our crash site. We thought we would find our MIA's last year, but unfortunately didn't. We're already in the field this year searching for our boys. Please hold good thoughts for this being that magic year to bring closure to the families of our MIAs still waiting for news of their loved ones. The families have now done their DNA, so when the time comes, they can be matched with the remains of their soldier. The families are still deciding whether to have a burial in Europe, or to bring the remains home to the USA for burial. I am hoping to be there for support and/or to escort them to Europe when the time comes.

Recently, a friend contacted me with news that a man from Germany was trying to make contact with me. Apparently, the man lives in a small village near where Dad's plane crashed. He told me how the people in his village got together against the German SS Soldiers. He is aware of Dad's crash and has a photo of the crash. This is a photo I tried to track down but was told its existence was just a rumor. I now have a copy of that photo. I've given this man additional information that I was told were also rumors and he plans to check into them out for me.

I'm constantly researching information for WW2BRPG, and from time to time I write articles for AWON and the 91st BGMA. A new project I am helping with is contacting family members of Dad's crew to gather photos and other information that will be used in connection with a Memorial Plaque that will be erected at the site of the crash, honoring my Dad and his crew. ***All these things help fill the hole in my heart when they touch the lives of others. Most of the time it's an exhausting pace, but always rewarding. I believe with all my heart that the daily choices we make honor the sacrifices made on the battlefield. I consider the freedoms I enjoy every day are a personal gift from the soldiers who died, so I have the privilege to live in a FREE America.***