

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Carl Creamer
Current home town: Xenia, Ohio
Age: Not given

A World War II Relationship to Remember

Little did a young soldier know that his two years in the army during World War II would create a relationship with a Belgian family that would last over sixty years. This soldier, Carl Creamer, had been married just a few months before he left the United States in December of 1944 on a ship called the *U.S.S. George Washington*. The ship carried thousands of troops away from their families to England and then to France.

Carl had been trained at a military railroad school in Louisiana, but when he arrived in France he was placed in the 37th Engineer Corp. The Engineer Corp was not a railroad unit. The Engineer Corp needed soldiers because, two weeks earlier, the invasion on Omaha Beach had killed many from that unit. Carl's unit unloaded supplies from ships to build airstrips for US planes to land. He also helped guard German POWs who also unloaded ships. Carl was later assigned to a motor pool, driving troops and supplies throughout France and Germany.

Carl was re-assigned to Bassenge, Belgium. V-1 flying bombs, also known as "buzz bombs," had destroyed numerous military quarters. As a result, many soldiers were sent to stay in Belgian homes. Carl and five other soldiers were sent to stay in Monsieur and Madame Delvaux's home. They had two teenage daughters, Mimi and Valerie. The Delvaux family opened their home and hearts to the soldiers. They stayed in the basement of their home while the six soldiers occupied the upstairs. When the soldiers came in at night, they would leave their muddy boots outside to keep from dragging dirt into the house. By morning, Monsieur Delvaux would have all the boots cleaned and waiting for the men. Madame Delvaux found out that Carl's wife was pregnant, so she knitted some baby outfits to send to Dorothy. Staying with this Belgium family made Carl feel a little more at home and less at war during the two months he stayed there. When it was time to leave, Carl promised to keep in touch with the Delvaux's and even to try to return one day.

Carl returned home in January of 1946. Dorothy greeted Carl at Union Station in Columbus, Ohio, with their son, Dale, who was 13 months old. This was Carl's first time meeting his son. Dale was wearing one of the outfits sent from Belgium.

The story of the Belgian family did not end with the war. Carl was able to return to visit the Delvaux family in 1975. Carl's daughter and son-in-law were stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany. When Carl and Dorothy visited them in Germany, they traveled to Belgium to see the family. Finding the same house thirty years later was difficult. Carl showed an old photograph of the Delvaux family to a woman walking on the street. She recognized the girls and led Carl to the house. The house numbers had been changed,

but the house looked much the same. Carl walked up to the door, knocked, and Mr. Delvaux came to the door. Even after thirty years, Mr. Delvaux greeted him by first name. The language barrier caused quite a problem until both daughters came to visit. Mimi, the oldest daughter, was an elementary teacher and was able to interpret most of the conversation. That evening, when greeting Valerie, Carl called her "Mischief" because she would sometimes hide the soldiers' helmets or tie their shoelaces together. Valerie remembered the nickname given to her thirty years before. What an emotional and wonderful opportunity it was for Carl to see this Belgian family again! Carl had kept his promise.

While in Belgium, the Creamers also visited Henri-Chapelle Cemetery where nearly 3,000 US soldiers are buried. Carl was impressed with the care of the cemetery. While visiting the cemetery, the Creamer family saw Belgian families placing flowers on the graves. Belgian families had adopted individual gravesites of soldiers and have taken care of them since the war. The cemetery was one of the most beautiful Carl had ever seen.

This story continued, with letters being sent back and forth between the Delvaux family (Mimi) and the Creamer family. In September of 2003, Mimi traveled from Brussels, Belgium, to visit Carl and Dorothy. By this time, Carl and Dorothy had moved from Columbus to Xenia, Ohio. She stayed with them for a week. They shared many fond memories. Mimi told them of other sites in Belgium that still pay tribute to World War II American soldiers.

In the summer of 2009, Carl's son and daughter and families took Carl and Dorothy to Washington D.C. to see the World War II memorial. "The monument is certainly a beautiful tribute to the many veterans who lost their lives while serving their country and also to the soldiers who were lucky enough to come home," Carl stated with tears running down his cheeks.

World War II was certainly not an easy time for this soldier. He saw bloodshed; he had friends killed; he missed his new bride; he missed the birth of his son, Dale; and he missed his brothers, sister, and other extended family. However, his relationship with the Delvaux family was a memory that became a blessing for many years to come.

Carl and Dorothy reside in Xenia, Ohio. They lived in the Columbus area for forty years, in Galloway, Ohio. Carl, now an eighty-eight year old veteran, is a retired railroader. Dorothy is a retired head cook from Southwestern City Schools. They have two children, Dale and Carla, who are retired public school principals in the Dayton, Ohio area. They have four grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.

(More)



Carl Creamer, 1944



Mimi Delvaux (left) with Dorothy and Carl Creamer, 2003