

# Trip to husband's grave site was emotional one

by Karon Sinning  
PARIS STAR STAFF

Jean Stevenson, her son Wayne Robbins and grandsons Tim and Reggie are back from a trip that took them across the ocean and back to a time when thousands of brave men and women lost their lives.

Jean and her family traveled to Grosebeek, Holland to participate in the Dutch Remembrance Day ceremony and to visit the final resting place of the father Wayne never met.

Paris resident, Reg Robbins left for his tour of duty in the second world war in June of 1944. He lost his life in Udem, Germany, February 22, 1945, two days before the couple's fifth wedding anniversary and never got to see the son that he and Jean shared.

Jean had not been able to make the trip to Holland until this year and accompanied by her family it was certainly a trip to remember.

The family was helped throughout their stay in Holland by a Dutch family.

Jaap Been and his family became involved with war veterans by hosting a British officer, a few years ago, who wanted to attend the War Memorial ceremony in Holland. After answering that ad in the newspaper, Been became more and more interested in the history of the war and those who gave their lives to help free Holland.

"Jaap was wonderful, he had everything arranged for us before we arrived at our cottage. He even brought in groceries," said Jean.

The family attended the May 4, evening Memorial service at the Grosebeek War Cemetery, but prior to that, also joined in the "Walk of



**Jean Stevenson, Wayne, Tim and Reggie Robbins stand at the grave site of Jean's former husband and Wayne's father Reg Robbins who was killed in World War II. It is the first time the family was able to visit the grave and it was an emotional visit for all.**

Silence".

The Walk of Silence is approximately a mile and a half walk, that almost all of the residents take part in, from the town hall in Grosebeek to the cemetery.

"It was really spectacular to see, all the people marching along in complete silence. They end in the Cemetery, at their Cenotaph monument, for the ceremony, which was lovely. Near the end of the service, all the children are given small candles in glass holders that they place around the monument. It is nearly dusk then, so it is quite effective," said Jean.

Wayne and his older son, Tim placed the memorial wreath on the Cenotaph as part of the official cere-

mony.

"We waited for them to call out Reg's name, but the wreath was so large there was no way I could have carried it up to the monument. I was really glad when Wayne asked if I wanted him and Tim to do it," said Jean.

During the family's visit to the cemetery where Reg Robbins was buried, Jean was asked to complete her name and address on the back of Reg's registration card in the cemetery archives.

"I guess there was a woman whose life had been saved by a Canadian soldier. She found the man's family through the filing system maintained in the cemetery to let them know

what had happened and to thank them," said Jean.

Jean's family also participated in an event at the Canadian Netherlands Memorial forest.

A helicopter carried in the last Maple tree which was planted by Princes Margriet of Holland, the Mayor, and the Minister.

The family also visited many other Canadian war cemeteries in Holland.

"We also went to the Reichswald Forest, along the Rhine River. It borders Germany and Holland and is the site of a 13 day battle that saw thousands of soldiers from both sides lose their lives," said Wayne.

In Cleve the family went to a German War cemetery, then to Udem

to see the area where Reg died and finally to the War Cemetery in the German Reichswald.

This is the largest cemetery in the area, with over 7,000 soldiers buried there.

The family finished the emotional day, with a little bit of familiarity, at the McDonald's restaurant in Malden, where young Reggie wanted to go to.

Even though the trip was an emotional event, it was a relief for Jean to see the final resting place for Reg.

"I am so glad we know where he is. It is just a little overwhelming seeing the number of people buried there," said Jean.

Wayne and his sons also enjoyed the trip and plans are already in the works for a return trip, perhaps next year.

"I would really like to take my wife Cathy next time and let her see it all," said Wayne.

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