

NIEUWS / NEWS

Retrospective view “Concert for the Missing”

Saturday September 13th 2008

A lot of rain in the morning in combination with an uncomfortable temperature. Absolutely not the kind of weather that makes you smile. During the afternoon and early evening the rain nearly stopped and therefore luckily the concert could take place. The concert was performed by the Jack Million Band, a big band orchestra with 21 professional musicians from the Euregion. It was a homage to the 1,722 missing American soldiers whose names are carved on the “Walls of the Missing” of the American cemetery in Margraten. It was a great evening during which over 1,000 visitors could witness the amazing Glenn Miller repertory. Afterwards Jack Coenen (leader of the orchestra) and his band members received an enormous applause. The concert was an initiative of the congregation Margraten supported by the Foundation. With the musical performance the start signal was given for adopting the names of the 1,722 missing American liberators.

With this letter the foundation wishes to inform the adoptive fathers about the activities and developments within the organisation.

Memorial Day, Sunday May 24th 2009

This year the ceremony of Memorial Day will take place at the American Cemetery on Sunday 24th of May and also commemorating the 400-year-old relationship between The Netherlands and the USA.

The program of the ceremony will be as follows:

- 10.00 am: the Eucharist ceremony organized by the Foundation ‘Culturele Muziekmanifestaties Margraten’ (Cultural Musical Manifestations Margraten). This ceremony will be supported musically.
- 15.00 pm: Memorial assembly with speeches and the placing of the coronets. The ceremony ends with a fly-over by American and Dutch jet-fighters.

The organization of the Memorial assembly is lead by the American Embassy. The ceremony is accessible for everyone. For those invited, chairs and separate places are reserved. All other visitors can take place on the grandstands build alongside the cemetery. Past years show that the ceremony attracts thousands of visitors, among which many adoptive fathers.

Also this year the committee of the Foundation hopes to welcome a large number of adoptive fathers again, covering the cemetery with a great many flowers.

Parking problems the day before Memorial Day.

Normally there is plenty of parking space at the cemetery, however the past few years show that the day before Memorial Day is very busy as well. This can cause trouble for adoptive fathers bringing their flowers to find a parking spot. Therefore it would be wise for the adoptive fathers to bring their flowers on Friday instead.



Medal of Honour (Congregation of Margraten)

At the beginning of the concert on September 13th the chairman of the Foundation, Mrs. Opreij-Bendermacher, was handed the medal of honor from the congregation Margraten by Mayor Van Beers. This decoration was given to the Foundation as a token of appreciation for the work done with reference to the adoption register since its foundation in 2002.

Book “Crosses in the Wind” still for sale

As already mentioned in an earlier Newsletter, the construction of the American cemetery in Margraten was, among others, written down in the book ‘Crosses in the Wind’, by Lieutenant-Colonel J.J. Shomon, containing over 200 pages and fitted with a great number of unique photos. This issue, although running low, is still available for € 15.00 at the Rabobank Margraten. On top of that the book can be ordered (mail or phone) at our secretariat as well. The price including shipping is € 18.50 per book.

Adoption of the names on the Walls of the Missing

The Foundation is pleased to see that over 640 names on the Walls of the Missing have already been adopted. Especially people connected to the Jack Million Band have put extra effort into this. Without a doubt the number of adoptions will grow during the coming months. The main goal is, now that all graves have been adopted, to have all names on the Walls of the Missing adopted as well, occasionally flowering up the Wall.

The waiting list keeps on growing

In the 2008 edition of our Newsletter we mentioned that all 8,301 graves of liberators at the American cemetery had nearly been adopted. Since June 2008 this has actually been the case. For new requests the Foundation has set up a so-called waiting list. On this waiting list 82 names have already been registered, of those who have not yet been assigned a grave.

Perhaps some adoptive fathers, for what reason may be, are no longer capable to visit the cemetery and are willing to give up their adoption to someone on the waiting list. If that is the case, our request is for you to contact us. This can be done in a letter to the secretariat (P.O. Box 22, NL-6269 ZG, Margraten) or by email: st.adoptie.graven@margraten.nl. Please mention your phone-number as well, this will enable us to contact you.

Flowers at the Walls of the Missing

Those who have adopted names of liberators on the Walls of the Missing cannot use the pitch-vases. A solution is to put the flowers into a so-called oasis and label them with the name of the missing liberator. You can place this oasis at the foot of the wall. For the flowers not to wither that quickly, it is wise to moisture the oasis and then packing it in a small plastic bag.

Letter of Thanks American World War II Orphans Network (AWON)

In our last Newsletter (April 2008) you were informed that our Foundation was planning to give a great part of the (price)money granted to us by the Limburg Award 2008 to AWON. The committee decided to hand € 3,500.- to AWON.

Beginning of January the committee of AWON informed us in writing, that during Memorial Day 2010 next of kin will be able to visit the grave of their father for the very first time in Margraten. Without our support some of those AWON-members would not have been able to do so. Furthermore the AWON-committee mentions that our Foundation operates as a ‘Bridge-builder’ between The Netherlands and the USA and therefore contributing to a unique relationship between the people of both countries. Those who wish to read this letter in full, this can be done on our website.



Status of the construction of the Memorial Centre

For most of the adoptive fathers it is already known that the committee of Margraten in cooperation with the committee of the Province of Limburg are working on getting a Memorial Centre build on or near the American cemetery. Last summer Mayor Van Beers together with a delegation of the province of Limburg visited a number of Senators in Washington in order to inform them about these plans. In the USA a great appreciation and admiration has been expressed for how the adopting-system -for the fallen ones buried in Margraten- was established and the way it is maintained.

This visit of the delegation brought about a counter visit to Margraten of an American delegation containing staff-members of the House of Representatives solely occupied with Veteran Affairs, among which the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), staff-members for budget-affairs at the Pentagon, a delegation of the ABMC, a delegation of the American Embassy and the board of the American Cemetery Margraten. This visit took place in the city hall on December 18th 2008. During this meeting, that took over two hours, Mayor Van Beers as well as representatives of local/regional organizations connected to the American cemetery -among which our Foundation- got the chance to support a possible realization of the Memorial Centre by giving a visual speech. It is clear that building such a centre will require large funds. Mayor Van Beers informed the American guests that the congregation of Margraten is willing to support such a project and that they have already set aside a nice amount for its realization. We hope that this visit will help to contribute to the construction of the Memorial Centre.

Progress project Peter Schrijvers

With the Newsletter of 2008 a questionnaire was enclosed in which Peter Schrijvers, who teaches American History at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, asked the adoptive fathers to tell their story on their motivation and experiences with reference to the adoption. Mr. Schrijvers is the author of several published books on WWII, as well as in English as in Dutch. Mr. Schrijvers is currently working on a book on the adoption phenomena in Margraten. Among the Foundation Mr. Schrijvers has also contacted the Regional Historical Centre Limburg, the Foundation "Akkers van Margraten" and the regional geography and history organizations of Margraten. As well as American as Dutch publishers have already shown interest in this project. Mr. Schrijvers is therefore very pleased to inform us that he has received a massive amount of feedback, almost 1,100 reactions with a wealth of useful information. He wishes to use this Newsletter to thank all those who have responded for their enthusiastic cooperation. Through this yearly Newsletter the adoptive fathers will be kept informed on the progress of this project.

Opening hours

The cemetery is open 7 days a week from 9 am – 5 pm.
On Christmas' day and New year's day the cemetery is closed

Change of address

Please note that any changes, e.g. address, that may be important for the adoption register should be reported to the foundation in time.

Again stock green pitch vases replenished

Reality shows that the number of adoptive fathers, visiting the cemetery on Memorial Day to place flowers at the grave of the adopted liberator, increases each year. They are very willing to use the available green vases situated nearby the office building. In order to meet the growing demand for these vases the Foundation has replenished the stock over the past years by purchasing 2,500 pieces. Yet it appeared that during the last Memorial Day -despite our efforts- the number of vases was still not sufficient and therefore we decided to buy another 1,000 pieces. Adoptive fathers who have not yet brought a green vase are urged to do so. That way we can maintain our stock level. You can fill your vase by using the water from the pond at the Square of Honor.



school children visit the cemetery.

Exchanging graves

Our foundation does not condone the exchange of adopted graves. We consider it improper.

Did you know that:

- on May 4th (Commemoration of the Dead) the cemetery is also open during the evening hours
- the Foundation receives requests from schools and youth-organizations for adopting graves and that these requests are given priority
- for level 7 and 8 (primary schools) an educational leaflet on the American cemetery is being developed, among others supported by our Foundation
- in 1944/45 693 Russian soldiers were buried in Margraten as well and that these graves are also allocated for adoption
In 1947 the remains of these soldiers were brought in from the Russian Field of Honor situated in Leusden.
Reporter Remco Reiding, based in Moscow, has been able to inform 129 families about the faith of their lost ones, during 10 years of intense investigation. On the website <http://kampamersfoort.nl/zforvl.html> you can find more information on this.
- because of the people of "Akkers van Margraten", the African Americans (still alive) that helped burying the fallen soldiers in 1944/45 were located in order to hear and put down their story
- a great part of the costs for making the DVD 'Do You Remember' and 'Monument between the Hills' was sponsored by the Dutch America Institute Limburg (NAIL) and is still available for the collect price of € 17,50 at: Julianalaan 7, NL-6269 CL, Margraten (phone 043-4581783)
- we find it suitable to send each and every adoptive father a newsletter separately even those living at the same address
- the congregation of Margraten has founded the Association Memorial Centre Margraten under chairmanship of Mr. B.J.M. baron van Voorst tot Voorst, former provincial governor Province Limburg, and that this Association is occupied with a possible construction of a Memorial Centre on or near the American cemetery

"Akkers van Margraten"

Up till now it had never been investigated what impact the construction of the American cemetery must have had for the people living in Margraten en surroundings. This has recently been done with a project called "Akkers van Margraten" -an oral history project- an initiative of cooperating regional geography and history organizations Margraten (SHOM).

During 2008 several interviews were held between initiators and eye-witnesses, those who witnessed the construction of the cemetery as well as the period following. Eventually memories and experiences of 28 eye-witnesses were caught on film. On top of that the filmmakers went to the USA to capture app. 10 stories of veterans, who had worked on the cemetery. During that two-months visit they also had the time to look into American archives. They were able to copy and film numerous documents, photos and picture-material. These materials, which remain property of SHOM, are lent out to the Regional Historical Centre Limburg (RHCL) in Maastricht.

At the end of January 2009, with a great many eye-witnesses present, the project was closed. The committee of the Foundation was there as well.

In the meantime those who executed this project founded the Foundation "Akkers van Margraten". The Foundation has the main goal to make all materials, which they have collected during the oral history project, accessible for each age-group. This by means of lectures, publications, books and films. On top of that the attempt is made to have a "Eye-witness book" published in September 2009, for the occasion of the 65-year liberation. You can follow the progress of the Foundation on the website: www.akkersvanmargraten.nl.

You can contact the foundation by mail:

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Colophon

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LSO-performance Sunday September 13th

In an agreement the Foundation, the committee of Limburg and the committee of Margraten, together with the Symphonic Orchestra of Limburg have come to terms regarding the performance of a Requiem at the cemetery until 2010. More information can be found in due time on the website of the congregation Margraten: www.margraten.nl. The Foundation hopes that the musical manifestation will trigger many adoptive fathers to come by one extra time to place a flower.