

# NIEU

**Please note: new  
e-mail address**

Our Foundation has a new  
e-mail address.

The new address is

**[info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)**

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## **A thanks to our benefactors**

The foundation regularly receives donations from adopters. A heartfelt thanks for that. Also for the year 2010 our foundation has been marked by the Tax Collector's Office as 'Institution for General Benefit', which means that, under certain conditions, donations can be tax deductible.

## Opening hours Cemetery

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.

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## 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.

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## Exchanging graves

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

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## 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 in 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 rapidly, it is advised to wet the oasis beforehand and put it in a small plastic bag.

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# NIEUWS / NEWS

## A concert to close the 65th Adoption Anniversary

Marking the 65th anniversary of organized adoption at the American Cemetery In Margraten a Jubilee Concert was held at the Vrijthof Theatre In Maastricht. Now we will also round off the anniversary with a concert.

**The concert will take place on Tuesday, June 7th at the Parkstad Limburg Theater. The address is Burgemeester van Grunsvenplein 145, Heerlen. Start is at 8 pm.**

Details of the program, the musicians and contributing artists, can be found in a separate letter elsewhere on this website. There you can also find out how to obtain tickets, but we must warn you that, last year, these were sold out within two days.

## Change in the board

Mrs. Aimée Haenen, member of the Foundation's board, has -for personal reasons- laid down her position. As replacement the board has appointed Mr. Frans Roebroeks from Sint-Geertruid. Frans works as a Keeper of Records at the Regional Historical Center of Limburg in Maastricht. He is also chairman of the Joint Organizations for Regional Geography and History

of the former Margraten Municipality. Frans was already linked to the cemetery because he was co-initiator and secretary of the Fields of Margraten Foundation.

*Frans Roebroeks*



*With this letter the foundation wishes to inform the adopters about the activities and developments within the organization..*

## The Adoption Jubilee in retrospect

Memorial Day 2010, May 30th, also marked the 65th anniversary of the Adoption Organisation.

The Jubilee of the Foundation was attended by no less than 75 American guests. The majority of them next of kin (some with companions) of liberators buried at the American cemetery in Margraten and united in the American World War II Orphans Network (AWON).

### On Saturday May 29th

there was a reception at Margraten's Town Hall where the visitors were able to meet with the adopters of the graves of their deceased relatives. An emotional event with tears being shed occasionally.

After the festivities at the Town Hall the program continued with a memorial service at the monument in nearby Mesch. The ceremony was supported by the Royally Recognized 'Amicitia' drum-band and brass-band from Banholt, a delegation of St. Sebastianus' citizen's soldiers from Mheer, the so-called Brothers in Arms chapter Maastricht/Heuvelland plus a group of children from the local primary school.

Our American guests and many others present were sincerely moved by the tones of the Clarions of by the Amicitia Harmony later that evening at the Laathof in Mesch.

### Sunday May 30th (Memorial Day)

in spite of poor weather, attendance at the cemetery was very good. For our American friends it must have been an impressive occasion that will remain in their memories.



### Monday May 31st

The Jubilee Concert -for those adopters who managed to obtain a ticket- at the Vrijthof theatre in Maastricht, with all our American guests invited as well.

It was a fantastic evening led by Jack Coenen with the Jack Million Band, the Voice Art Ensemble, Jack Vinders and 'The Moselsänger' all performing. For this special event the Jack Million Band was supported by 10 extra violins and by their singers Ellen Bliet, Geralt van Gemert and Friso Kuperus. Thanks as well to Louk Hustinx' outstanding presentation, the Jubilee Concert was a tremendous success.

**Photographs of the different activities can be viewed on our website [www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)**



# Memorial Day 2011

This year Memorial Day will be celebrated on the American Cemetery on Sunday May 29th. The program though is similar to other years:

- **10 am :** Eucharist ceremony organized by the Stichting Culturele Muziek Manifestaties Margraten (Foundation for Cultural Musical Manifestations Margraten). This ceremony will be led by the Deputy Bishop Monseigneur E. de Jong, while the music will be performed by the Mergellands Male Choir with tenor Hubert Delamboye.
- **3 pm :** Memorial service with speeches and the placing of wreaths

The memorial service is organized by the American Embassy. Visitors to the memorial ceremony who arrive from either direction Maastricht or from Gulpen would normally be able to reach the cemetery without having to be redirected by the police or by marshals. Still, due to limited parking space, it is advisable for those who arrive from the direction Gulpen to park their cars somewhere in the streets of Margraten and proceed to the cemetery on foot, which is about 10 minutes walking distance.

Both the ceremonies in the morning and the afternoon are freely accessible. From experience we know that in the morning there will be sufficient seats for all present. At the afternoon ceremony there are reserved seats and separate places for those invited. All other visitors can be seated on the grandstands and round the barriers on the cemetery. Out of respect for the military buried there it is not permitted to sit on the lawn.

The Foundation's board, as always, encourages adopters to lay flowers at their adopted grave, so that the graveyard will temporarily turn into a huge bed of flowers. As in other years we do advise those who bring flowers not to come late, in view of limited parking space, especially when the weather is nice. We suggest that those, who have the opportunity, bring their flowers already on Thursday or Friday.

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## Frank and Monique Radder donate Demarrage Entrepreneurial Prize to our Foundation

On December 15th 2010, entrepreneurial couple Frank and Monique Radder from Margraten were voted winners of the so called Demarrage Entrepreneurial Finals by the audience at the Parkstad Limburg Theatre in Heerlen. This contest had been organized by the Rabobank Central South-Limburg.

Frank and Monique Radder are the owners of the Radder Horticulture for Plants in Margraten that was established 25 years ago. Some 5 years ago they set-up a special branch within the company named Pure Aroma ([www.puur-aroma.com](http://www.puur-aroma.com)). Puur Aroma is unique because it cultivates biological herbs for culinary purposes, some half million plants per year. These spices are sold in The Netherlands, but get exported as well. In the cultivation of these herbs Frank and Monique Radder are always looking for new possibilities, new species and other innovations.



As a reward for their achievement, the Chairman of the Board of Raboband Central South-Limburg, Mr. Bert Penders, handed the winners the prestigious Demarrage trophy plus a check worth 4,000 Euros to be designated to a charitable institution. We, in turn, are very honored that Frank and Monique have chosen to donate the money to our foundation. The official presentation of the check took place last March 24th. It is clear that the foundation is very grateful for this generous donation by Frank and Monique Radder, who are also adopters of a grave at the American Cemetery in Margraten. For the donation, a suitable destination will be chosen.

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## Russian Field of Honor

In the first few years at the Margraten cemetery some 700 Soviet soldiers were buried. In 1945/1946 their graves had

been adopted by citizens of Margraten and the surrounding countryside. As of 1947 the remains of these Russians were brought to the Russian Field of Honor in Leusden. A few years ago a researcher from nearby Amersfoort, Remco Reiding, started a search for relatives of

these Russian soldiers. Since then the next of kin of more than 170 soldiers, that have been buried in Leusden, have been traced. Now these relatives finally know where their father or brother lies, many of them want to visit his grave for the very first time. But many are

not able to pay for the trip. That's why Remco has set-up an organization with the aim of having the Russian graves adopted for a remuneration. The profit will enable several relatives to come to The Netherlands. Remco now wants to get in touch with those who had adopted a grave of a Soviet soldier in the period 1945-1947. But also for other inquiries you can contact Remco Reiding by e-mail: [grafadoptie@gmail.com](mailto:grafadoptie@gmail.com). You can also visit his wonderful website: [www.russisch-ereveld.nl](http://www.russisch-ereveld.nl)

## State of affairs of the adoption register

With the exception of ten graves, all 8,301 graves have been adopted. Those ten graves are held in reserve and are meant for schools who want to adopt. There are currently 156 persons on the waiting list. Of the names on the Walls of the Missing 940 have been adopted (against 800 last year). That means that there are still 782 names available for adoption.

Adopters who, through circumstances such as old age or migration, are no longer

able to visit the grave, are kindly asked to contact us. We can then pass the grave on to be adopted by someone on the waiting list. When age or health keeps an adopter from regularly visiting the cemetery, it is possible to pass on the adoption to a family member. In all other cases the board of the foundation will decide to whom the grave will be offered for adoption.

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## Book on the history of adoption nears completion: 'The Margraten Boys'

After years and years of research in archives and after processing the stories, documents and photographs of 1,200 adopters from 5 countries and relatives from the US, the all-embracing history of 70 unique years of adoption tradition in Margraten is about to be completed. **Peter Schrijvers**, Professor of American history at the University of New South Wales in Sydney (Australia) has already written 4 internationally acclaimed books on Americans during World War II. It is beyond doubt that his new book, **THE MARGRATEN BOYS**, will be of great significance to all those who are involved in the adoption of American graves and to anybody who has ever visited this impressive memorial site in South Limburg. The book tells the story of a unique phenomenon, that has brought together people from within the region and beyond in an atmosphere of charity, peacefulness and historic awareness. A story of solidarity that has lost none of its strength and glow in spite of the fact that in 70 years' time The Netherlands, America and the rest of the world have thoroughly changed.

At the same time the book is a rich collection of numerous overwhelming testimonies and photographs, collected with the help of adopters. About hardship and suffering during the Nazi occupation, but even more about the life and death of those American soldiers who brought the ultimate sacrifice for the long-awaited liberation and about the eternal grief of the relatives who stayed behind on the other side of the Atlantic.

The Dutch edition of **DE MARGRATEN BOYS** is published by **Manteau** and will be available as of April 2012. In that same month **Palgrave MacMillan** will publish the English language version. For more information please check out our website: [www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl).

**Manteau** Publishing now has a unique offer. For the first 1,000 who order a copy of **DE MARGRATEN BOYS** (for € 21.95 + € 3 for shipping within The Netherlands) a special edition will be produced with all the names of these 1,000 imprinted in the book. Don't hesitate, as the interest in this book is mounting.

Enlisting/ordering can be done by mail (Stichting Adoptie Graven Amerikaanse Begraafplaats Margraten, P/O Box 22, 6269 ZG Margraten) or by e-mail ([info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)) or by telephone (Bert Kleijnen, 043-4582177).

Payment can be done on the bank account number of our foundation: **15 88 20 045** (IBAN: NL89RABO0158820045 ; BIC: RABONL2U).

On the transaction form you need to fill in: initials, name, address and telephone number. Please note that your order is only effective as soon the money has been remitted to the account. Ordering starts now and ends January 31st, 2012.

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## Searching for information

As we have stated in earlier newsletters, the foundation has limited knowledge concerning the adopted servicemen. The little we (and the cemetery) know is stated on the adoption certificate. If an adopter wants to know more, like place of residence, age, place where killed, then there are ways to find out more. Sometimes through the internet,

but also through the so-called IDPF (Individual Deceased Personnel File). How the IDPF can be consulted, you can find on our website: [www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl) where you can download an IDPF application form. You could also check out the websites [www.fallen-notforgotten.nl](http://www.fallen-notforgotten.nl) and [www.adoptiegraven.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven.nl). This last site has a forum where you can ask questions to people who in the past have made similar inquiries.

## William O. Solms passed away

One of the pioneers of the American cemetery, William (Bill) O. Solms has died on March 28th 2010. Captain William Solms was in command of the 960th Quartermaster Service Company (QSC), a company that was barely mentioned in Shomon's book *Crosses in the Wind*. The 960th QSC consisted of 'white' officers and 'black' soldiers and non commissioned officers. The company arrived in Sittard early November 1944, but was sent to Margraten on November 17th, just 7 days after the first soldier had been buried there. The soldiers and NCO's made quarter in the primary school at Gronsveld. The officers in the castle next to it. Transportation between Gronsveld and Margraten was supplied by army trucks. Captain Solms' men had to do their work in extremely bad weather. It kept raining for weeks, so the greasy clayish soil kept sticking to the spades and the graves, which were dug with great strain, kept on flooding. On top of that they also had to bury fallen German soldiers. In the film *Fields of Margraten* Captain Solms explained his anxiety concerning his men's reaction to that task. But they're weren't fussy about that. The very first German that they had to bury, still wore his black army boots when they lifted him to put him in a body bag. One of the Americans clicked the boot's heels together and spoke: "you were a good soldier but you fought on the wrong side". That broke the ice alright. One of Captain Solms' elder brothers was also fighting in Europe and each day William would inspect the rows of newly arrived corpses to check if his brother was not among them. Shortly after the start of the Battle of the Ardennes In the middle of November 1944 Cpt. Solms was ordered to move his company to Belgium. There his outfit took care of distributing ammunition. In September 2009 he was invited by the Margraten Municipality to visit Margraten together with one of 'his' African Americans Jefferson Wiggins. William Solms passed away at the age of 89.



*September 2009, kapitein William Solms (l) en zijn sergeant Jefferson Wiggins (r) na 65 jaar terug op de begraafplaats*

## Activities of Fields of Margraten concluded

The Foundation Akkers van Margraten (Fields of Margraten) has concluded its work and has handed over all its products and activities to the Foundation Margraten Memorial Center. That is now officially called: Foundation Memorial Center Fields of Margraten.

The Foundation Akkers van Margraten has left us with a wonderful legacy. Just take a look at the website [www.akkersvanmargraten.nl](http://www.akkersvanmargraten.nl). Furthermore there's extensive footage with eyewitness stories by the Foundation Akkers of Margraten, which has now been placed at the Erfgoed van de Oorlog (Heritage of War) data-bank. These interviews can, in future, only be used for scientific purposes, after due permission. All other material that was gathered during the project, such as documents, photographs and film, has now been placed at the Regional Historical Center Limburg in Maastricht. As soon as all this material has been properly filed, it can be studied at the RHCL library. The Foundation Memorial Center Fields of Margraten has set up a so-called information point at the Heuvelland Library in Margraten. There is also a link through the website [www.margraten.org](http://www.margraten.org).

## Mrs. Fien Opreij-Bendermacher Royally distinguished

In a celebration on Saturday, May 29th 2010 in the Margraten Town Hall, the chairwoman of our foundation, Mrs. Fien Opreij-Bendermacher was presented by Mayor Jean Bronckers with the decorations connected with her royal appointment as Knight in the order of Orange Nassau. The ceremony was held in the presence of members of the AWON organization, who were there to meet with adopters of the graves of their fallen relatives. Others present were the board-members of the foundation and family-members of the chairwoman.

The mayor praised the dedication of the chairwoman of our foundation and summed up several of Mrs. Opreij's activities as a volunteer. Amongst others she was team leader of a group of girl scouts during her youth. She also organizes the yearly concert in the Margraten parish church and she co-founded the entrepreneurs-association De Fremme in Margraten. Furthermore she is the patroness of the royally acknowledged Harmony and Clarion Corps Amicitia in Banholt.



# New superintendent in Margraten



Since July 2010 Mr. Keith Stadler is the new superintendent of the American Cemetery in Margraten. Mr. Stadler took over this position from his predecessor Mr. Yasenchak who has been transferred to Italy. The editorial staff of this Newsletter has put forward a few written questions. Mr Stadler has answered them thoroughly...

## **Can you tell us something about yourself?**

I am originally from California where I was raised near the town of Placerville which was established during the Gold Rush of 1848. At the age of 18, I joined the United States Air Force where I spent 22 years as an enlisted Airman. Most of those years were spent here in Europe with 14 of them being in Italy. My wife comes from the French town of Chambéry and my two children are proud to have nationalities from both the United States and of France. After retiring from the USAF in 2007, I was asked to work for the American Battle Monuments Commission and was sent to Luxembourg as my first assignment where I served as the assistant to the Superintendent. In August of 2010, I was reassigned as the Superintendent here at the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial.

## **Why did you decide to come to Margraten?**

To be quite honest, I didn't know much about the town of Margraten when I was first offered this position. I was looking for a position in a nice community where I could raise my children and where I knew I could find good schools for them. I spoke with many people within the ABMC and the reputation of Margraten and this cemetery was such that I wanted to know more. I drove here with my family and we were delighted with what we found. I spoke with my predecessor, Mr. Yasenchak, and became excited about the possibility of overseeing such a beautiful and well respected cemetery.

## **In the short time you have been in Margraten, what impressions have you made?**

What has impressed my family and I the most since arriving here is the absolute kindness and warmth that we have received from the people of Margraten and the surrounding area. From the very first day we have been made to feel like we are a part of the community. For a family that moves quite often, I can't say how much it helps when you receive such a welcome. We have also been very impressed by the wonderful culture the local people have here in Southern Limburg. My children are always happy to ride their bikes to Margraten and buy cheese on market days.

## **What distinguishes Margraten from other American military cemeteries?**

The Netherlands American Cemetery located here just outside Margraten is unique in that from day one, the people of Margraten and the surrounding area have felt a special connection with these hallowed grounds and the soldiers buried here. It remains the only cemetery within the American Battle Monuments Commission that has 100% of its graves adopted by people in the local community. Caring for the cemetery and the heroes buried here has become far more than a surge of gratitude following WWII. It has in fact become a part of the local culture and a tradition that has been passed down from parents to children to grand children with as much dedication and commitment as ever before. Even schools have adopted graves and use the stories of these young Americans to teach the lessons of WWII and of the true cost of freedom that we all enjoy today. Remembering and caring for the soldiers in American War Cemeteries may not be unique to this cemetery, but I believe that the exceptional level of commitment to the cemetery here in Southern Limburg makes the Netherlands American Cemetery truly unique.

## **Do you have anything you would like to share with those who adopted soldiers?**

To all of the grave adopters out there I just want to say "Thank You". Shortly after arriving here I had the honor of escorting a visitor to his uncle's gravesite. This man was the first in his family ever to visit his uncle and when we arrived at the gravesite there was a fresh bouquet of flowers already there. I explained to him that all 8,301 graves have been adopted and that the Dutch people will never let his uncle be forgotten. They are proud to fill in when the families, who live so far away, cannot be there to visit their loved ones. The man was so incredibly moved by this and he told me what a comfort it was to know that his uncle, a man that he always thought of as his hero, was being so well looked after by others who also recognize the valor of his deeds.

## **For closing remarks, what do you foresee in the future?**

As time carries us further and further away from the events of WWII we are constantly looking for more appropriate ways of telling the stories of those resting here. While I do not know what changes will come or how long they will take, I do know that the American Battle Monuments Commission is committed to ensuring that the lessons of competence, courage, sacrifice and honor will never be forgotten and in the words of our first Chairman, General John J. Pershing, "Time Will Not Dim the Glory of Their Deeds".

# Margraten Memorial Concert 2011

On Sunday 4th of September at 3 pm, for the sixth consecutive time, there will be a Memorial Concert on the American Cemetery in Margraten. This time however it will not be a Requiem but Ludwig von Beethoven's *MISSA SOLEMNIS* in D. grt. opus 123 by the Limburg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Roberto Rizzi-Brignoli with the Brabant Choir (Conductor: Louis Buskens) and four soloists (soprano: Kelly God / mezzo-soprano: Mirjam Schreur / tenor: Yves Saelens / bass: Math Dirks). For further information [www.margrateneerbetoon.nl](http://www.margrateneerbetoon.nl). There is also a link to this site on our own website.

Like all other activities at the cemetery, this is a free concert, however, the cost of orchestra, choir, soloists and facilities are enormous. The Margraten Tribute Foundation is doing a good job financing this concert through contributions from the Limburg Province, the municipality Eijsden-Margraten and several funds and sponsors. There have also been donations by the Friends of the Limburg Symphony Orchestra society and the so-called Club of 500 and Club of 100. But nonetheless every donation is more than welcome because without sufficient funding the Margraten Memorial Concert might not take place in the coming years.

The board of the Foundation for Adopting Graves at the American Cemetery in Margraten allows the Margraten Tribute Foundation to call upon our adopters to donate for this extraordinary memorial concert. Every donation is more than welcome, but benefactors, who donate € 25 or more, will become a "Friend of the Margraten Memorial

Concert" and will receive two guaranteed seats for the concert. In that case, don't forget to send us your address at [info@margrateneerbetoon.nl](mailto:info@margrateneerbetoon.nl) as soon as you have remitted your donation to account number 122606620 of the Tribute

Foundation. Two weeks prior to the concert you will receive the tickets for the two reserved seats from the Margraten Tribute Foundation.

## Did you know that:

- the DVD *Fields of Margraten* by production company 'Ruim Kader Films' can be obtained from the foundation. It is a 70 minute long documentary on the construction of the American Cemetery and an additional one hour with eye-witness stories, photographs and footage from the archives. We think that everybody who has a feel for the cemetery in Margraten should have a copy. You can order this DVD by phoning our board member Bert Kleijnen at 043-4582177. The price of the DVD is € 14.95 (shipping not included). This amount (plus shipping cost) should be transferred to our bank account number 15 88 20 045 (IBAN: NL89RABO0158820045 ; BIC: RABONL2U). On the transaction form you need to fill in: initials, name, address and telephone number.
- The book *Crosses in the Wind*, that among others describes the construction of the cemetery, is still for sale. The book contains more than 200 pages and features several unique photographs. For 15 Euros the book can be obtained from the local branch of the Rabobank in Margraten. It can also be ordered at our bureau by post or by e-mail. Then the price is Euros 18.50 per copy including shipping.

## Song as a tribute to the American Cemetery

The 'Knaltaler', a folk music band from the Eastern Mining District have just recorded a musical tribute to those who gave their lives for our freedom during World War II. The band will not officially release it as a single but the song titled 'ut Eareveld' (Field of Honor) can be found on the new Knaltaler album 'Echte Vrunde' (True Friends) which will be released at the end of this year. In the meantime adopters

and others can download the song for a small fee during the month of May.

We are very honored by the fact that the band has chosen to donate all income from this project to our foundation. In accordance with the band's wishes the money will be used to help AWON members with limited financial resources, whose fathers were buried at the American Cemetery In Margraten, to visit the graves of their fathers for the very first time.

The application for downloading the song should be operational by now. Of course we hope that many people will do so from [www.knaltaler.nl](http://www.knaltaler.nl)

You can contact the foundation by mail:  
Stichting Adoptie Graven  
Amerikaanse Begraafplaats Margraten  
PO Box 22, 6269 ZG Margraten,  
The Netherlands  
E-mail: [info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)  
website: [www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl)  
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