



# NIEUWS NEWS

STICHTING ADOPTIE GRAVEN  
AMERIKAANSE BEGRAAFPLAATS  
MARGRATEN  
v/h Burgercomité Margraten  
sinds 1945

FOUNDATION FOR ADOPTING  
GRAVES AT THE AMERICAN  
CEMETERY IN MARGRATEN  
formerly Civilian Committee of Margraten  
since 1945



Newsletter Year 19: April 2025

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*This newsletter from the Foundation  
for Adopting Graves American Cemetery  
Margraten informs all of the adopting  
families about the events and devel-  
opments within the adoption organization  
and at the American Cemetery.*



Het adopteren van Amerikaanse  
oorlogsgraven in Margraten  
is bijgeschreven in de Inventaris  
Immaterieel Erfgoed Nederland

## FOREWORD BY EMILE ROEMER, GOVERNOR PROVINCE OF LIMBURG



Plot T, Row 5, grave 9 is "my" adoption  
grave. The final resting place of an unknown  
soldier. An unknown soldier, but with that  
no unloved or unmissing soldier. His family  
does not know what happened to him and  
never got to hold him in their arms again  
allowed to close. That is precisely why I think  
it is so important to keep him, even though  
he has been with us for about eighty years  
in Margraten, to the this day, to continue to  
remember him. Without mentioning his  
name and without being able to tell his  
story.

Many adopters do know the name of "their"  
soldier, know about the story that belongs  
to him or her and in some even have contact  
with the relatives. And with the children of  
those relatives. You, as an adopter, thus  
pass on the stories about the war. You con-  
tinue to commemorate and remember. And  
especially now - in a world where peace is  
under pressure - that is crucial. Because

peace, freedom and security cannot be taken for granted. In Limburg, we know this and  
reflect on it extensively. On Liberation Day, May 5 2024, the Netherlands was silenced by  
an impressive lecture by Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You, from Roermond. And on September  
12, His Majesty King Willem-Alexander and Her Majesty Queen Máxima were guests in the  
village of Mesch. They made the same trip from the Belgian border as the Americans did  
80 years ago, with which the Allies then made the dumbfounded schoolteacher Jef Warnier  
the first liberated Dutchman.

Some two months after that Sept. 12, 1944, the first soldier was buried here in Margraten.  
Many more would follow, not to mention the 1,722 names on the impressive Walls of the  
Missing. As a grave adopter, you give the soldiers who gave their lives for us a face, a name,  
a story. Or - in the case of the unknown soldiers - the respect they deserve to last forever,  
even if we don't know who they are.

I am incredibly proud of you and your commitment to preserving this historic and valuable  
place. And I look confidently to the future, where I am sure that even as we celebrate 100  
or 200 years of liberation, the Foundation Adoption Graves American Cemetery Margraten  
will still be alive and kicking.

Emile Roemer  
governor of the Province of Limburg



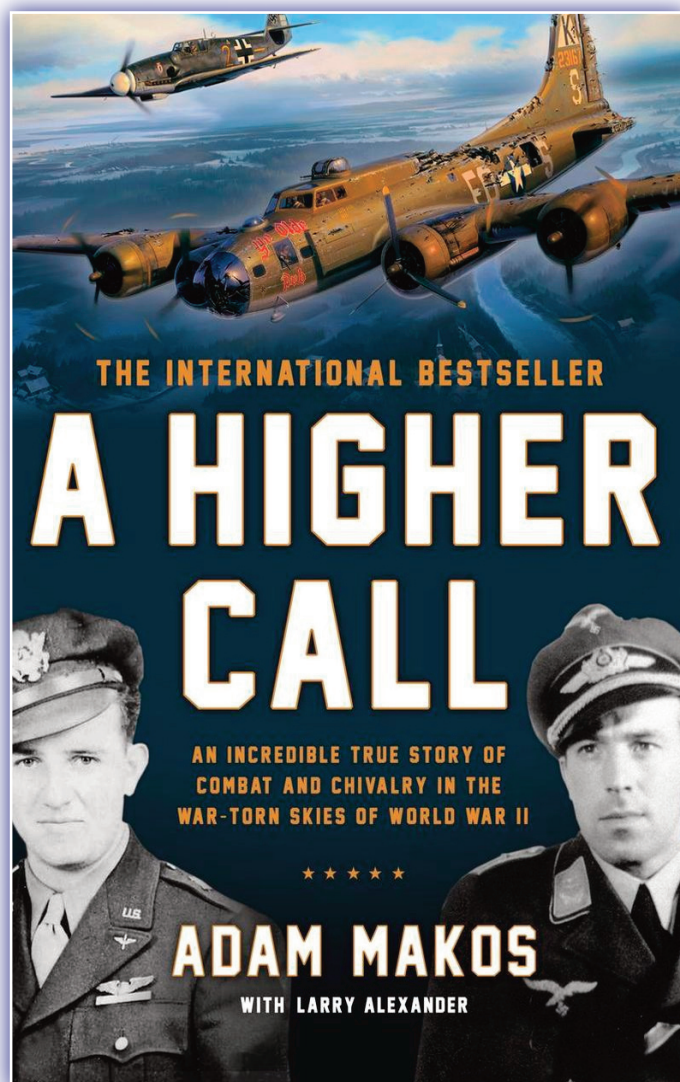


## A HIGHER CALL OF A GERMAN PILOT

### The story of Hub Bessems of Margraten and the book “A higher call” by Adam Makos

Hub Bessems was 14 when the Americans crossed the border at Mesch. As a child, he could very often be found in places where something was happening. “We had nothing else to do during the war.” That’s how he came upon the spot where a German fighter plane had crashed in an orchard near Termaar. The fire department had already been there to recover the remains but they had forgotten an arm still hanging in a tree. He also buried a dead horse where the entrance to the American cemetery is now. He can still point out the spot.

He told the story of a German wounded soldier who was bandaging his wounds in the fields opposite the current cemetery. Although wounded and defenseless, he was shot dead by an American soldier. This is contrary to agreements made in Geneva as early as the 19th century.



Adam Makos’ book is about a German fighter pilot Franz Stigler and an American B-17 pilot Charlie Brown. Their story is one of compassion and mercy amid the horrors of war. Franz Stigler grew up in Bavaria and worked as a pilot. At his brother’s urging, he joined the German Luftwaffe to fly a Messerschmidt Bf 109. He soon became disillusioned after many of his comrades died in the air war.

Charlie Brown, a farmer’s son from West Virginia was trained as a pilot of a B-17 bomber. His aircraft bore the name Ye Old Pub”. He was ordered to bomb a target in Germany on Dec. 20, 1943. His aircraft came under fire from German anti-aircraft guns and from attacks by German fighter pilots and was badly damaged. The “tail-gunner,” who operated the machine gun at the rear of the aircraft, was killed and half the crew was wounded. Charlie had every difficulty in keeping his aircraft in the air.

At that moment, Franz Stigler appears. He sees from his aircraft, a Messerschmidt Bf 109 fighter, that the B-17 is in serious condition, and he decides not to attack the enemy. Instead, he starts flying alongside the aircraft to escort it out of enemy territory. There flying beside the aircraft he prevents the aircraft from being attacked by others. In doing so, he risks severe punishment from his superiors or even the death penalty. Charlie Brown is speechless from Franz Stigler’s unexpected help. He manages to land his plane safely and survives the mission.

After the war, both men pick up their lives again but the memories of the horrors keep them busy for a long time. Franz flies on civilian aircraft for several more years and emigrates to Canada. Charlie returns to West Virginia and marries. Neither man talks about the war, but Charlie often thinks back to the moment he was spared by a German pilot. He is determined to find this German. In 1986, a time still without the Internet, he makes an appeal in a magazine for fighter pilots. Franz Stigler reads this appeal and with him the memories of his noble action return. The two men meet and form a close friendship. The events of 1943 can be concluded and both men realize that in war there are only losers. The book “A Higher Call” by Adam Makos is highly recommended. ◆



# Memorial Day

## Program: Friday May 23

19.30 Adoption Concert Military Orchestra  
"Limburgse Jagers".

## Program: Saturday May 24

10.30 am Gathering of the board of the adoption Foundation at the American cemetery for a wreath laying. Adopters are invited to attend this small ceremony. Afterwards you can place your own flowers at the grave.

## Program: Sunday May 25

10.00 am Holy Mass organized by the "Stichting Culturele Muziekmanifestaties Margraten". The Cecilia Mens Choir from Vaals with tenor Ben Heijnen will perform during the Holy Mass. The bishop mgr Ron van den Hout will lead the Mass.

3 pm The Memorial Service will include speeches and the laying of the wreaths.

## Access

The morning and the afternoon ceremonies are free and accessible. During the Holy Mass there are always sufficient seats available. For the afternoon ceremony there are special reserved seats and separate places for those who have received an invitation. Other visitors will be seated in the non-reserved seats, and behind the fences that are around the ceremony area.



## Route and parking

When coming to the Memorial Ceremony at Margraten, visitors who arrive from Maastricht (WEST) or Gulpen (EAST) can reach the cemetery using N278. Parking will be available at the Cemetery, and you will be directed for parking by the Marechaussee (Dutch Military Police). Usually there is plenty of parking available, however, we do advise that visitors arrive early, because heavy traffic is expected. Handicap parking will also be provided.

## Information

For any questions regarding the Memorial Day Ceremony, please contact: The ABMC Staff: American Cemetery. Address: American Cemetery 1, 6269 NA, Margraten, The Netherlands Telephone: 043 458 1208 (local) or +31 43 458 1208 (from the U.S.) Email: Netherlands@abmc.gov

## Adoption concert by the military Orchestra "Limburgse Jagers" Friday May 23 in Margraten

On Friday 23 May 2025, the Foundation will hold its annual adoption concert in community center Oos Heim in Margraten. The military orchestra "Limburgse Jagers", conducted by conductor Jos Stoffels, has agreed to host this concert. The military orchestra "Limburgse Jagers" is a community of former infantry conscripts serving with the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Battalion "Limburgse Jagers".

The orchestra was formed in 1992 after the end of the conscript regulations in the army and currently consists of 50 musicians. Since its founding it has worked enthusiastically to build up a broad repertoire. Of course, military marching music still has an important place, but there is also room for other types of popular music. The orchestra performs at home and abroad. Performances have included Belgium, Germany, Austria and Slovenia. During the celebration of 80 years of liberation in Mesch, the ROLJ was also present for the musical support. For the adoption concert is a special program composed with well-known soloist Mirjam Erkens. The rest remains a surprise. Also some veterans from the Second World War will this evening be present.

The adoption concert is intended for all American family members and relatives who have come to Margraten especially for Memorial Day. Adopters are also welcome to attend. Should you know about the visit of American relatives to the Memorial Day celebrations, please do not only inform the cemetery management in time, but also inform us. We will invite them to attend our

special adoption concert. Reception that evening is from 7.00 pm, concert starts at 7.30 pm. Admission is free of charge. To cover costs, we would greatly appreciate a free gift afterwards.

In order to facilitate the organization of this evening - also in view of the number of seats to be reserved - we kindly ask you to let us know before Friday May 16 2025 via [info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl) whether the invitation will be taken up and, if so, with how many people. You can also register by telephone on 043-4583050.

Happy to see you on 23 May.





# James Lee Cole connects two families

## The story of an adopter

As a little boy, growing up in Sint-Geertruid, there on the horizon was always the white tower of the American cemetery. A beacon and a place that made an impression. We came there from time to time and when I became interested in history, and understood better how important this place was, I really wanted to adopt a grave. I was 17 at the time, and I got to take care for the grave of Private James Lee Cole, a paratrooper from the 82nd Airborne division who fell near Groesbeek during Operation Market Garden. I really wanted to get in touch with his family if that opportunity was there. It seemed to me the best way to express the gratitude for our freedom that I felt, as did all those other adopters, but it was not an easy search. So I was very happy when I received a phone call from the adoption foundation that someone was looking for the adopter of James' grave. I wasn't expecting that! Rodney Davis, friend of the family and interested in the Second World War, had visited the grave on their behalf and heard about the adoption program. Contact was quickly made with Lee and William Wright in Athens, Georgia, and many letters and cards followed. Lee is James' daughter and together with her and the family we have uncovered much about him.

James was born in Dallas the oldest of two sisters and one brother. In his younger years, he worked as a carpenter in his father's construction company of his father. During a ball in Atlanta, he met Margaret: love at first sight. They were inseparable -until James also got sucked into the world conflict and received his call. After basic training, during which he was actually to become a baker, he found out in the spring of 1943 that he fulfilled the physical requirements for paratrooper training. These new units, of which the 82nd was the first, were looking for fit and brave volunteers. Honorable, increased pay, but a dangerous role on and actually behind the front lines. James went for it and successfully went through the arduous training. An important moment in his life was May 14, 1943, when his daughter Lee was born. Shortly before James left for preparations for D-Day, he was allowed to go on leave of absence. It would be the last time he saw her. As a machine gunner, James was part of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 3rd Battalion, Headquarters company. Like many others, he jumped in the night before the landings in the interior of Normandy. The 505 was tasked with the task of securing the important crossroads at St-Mère Église and defend it until the advancing troops from the beaches reached them. After weeks of bloody fighting that he miraculously survived, the unit was withdrawn to England to recover and prepare for a next mission. From the many letters he wrote home, speak of his hopes of returning, working with his father and brother in the carpentry business and to take care of his young family. He writes his little brother boldly about the great adventures he

experienced and which he would tell him about, but also expresses uncertainty about his fate. Notable are small details, such as the pictures of his wife and daughter that he tucked under the Plexiglas grip of his .45 service weapon. Together with his comrades in arms, James jumped again during Market Garden on Sept. 17, 1944. They liberated Groesbeek. During the jump he was wounded, for which he received a first Purple Heart medal. Back with his unit, their job was to defend the captured bridges against German attacks from the east. In one of those counterattacks he was killed on October 1, probably by artillery fire. His wife Margaret and his mother received word that he was back with his unit after his earlier injury, but wryly, he had already died by then. They remained in limbo. When his friends wrote to tell them that they had seen the socks and the candy his mother sent would be divided among his many friends, they knew enough. What remained was a great loss, but also a great friendship that began more than a decade ago. Shelby, granddaughter of James, was the first family member to visit his grave on July 29, 2021, a promise she made to his wife, her grandmother Margaret. It was a privilege to be



*James Lee Cole with daughter Lee*



there, and together we also visited the spot where he fell. We hope that his daughter Lee, who was 18 months when her father died, and has always missed him, may also live to see that. By now good friends and last year we were invited to the wedding of Shelby and her husband Ron in Atlanta. We also went visit Lee and her now husband William. There I received a very special gift: the Purple Heart Medal from James. What an honor. It is to me a sign of our strong friendship, but also a powerful reminder of the sacrifices he and so many others made and also of the important role that the cemetery in Margraten and all those adopters play in the lives of so many people.

Luc Amkreutz  
St Geertruid / Leiden



*In 2021 granddaughter Shelby (left) and her husband Ron together with the adopters Luc Amkreutz and Frederike Burghout visited the gravesite of grandfather James*

## Books and DVD's

Books and DVD's on the history of the Cemetery in Margraten and on our Adoption Program can be purchased from our webshop, which is in both English and Dutch:

<http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/webshop>





## LETTERS FROM THE PAST and an old photo book

It is late on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in January at the American cemetery in Margraten and we only have time for a short walk through the beautiful visitor center. We have a photo album of my mother, Dorothy de Jong, with us containing in it pictures of billeted soldiers. These boys were looking for some domesticity before they left for Germany. As a child, I often heard the stories that my mother told about the war and about the soldiers in Hoensbroek. The album, which for years patiently sat among the other albums of the Herinx-De Jong, contains not only pictures of soldiers, but also pictures of my parents kneeling at the grave of Lt. W.T. Worrall. I show the photos at the front desk and soon they manage to tell me where the grave of this lieutenant is located.

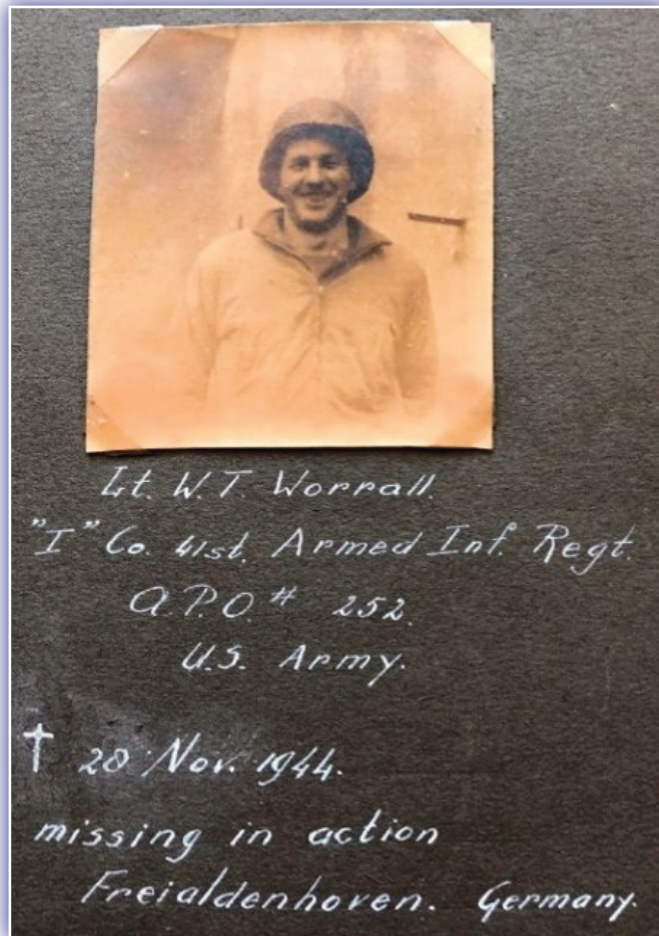
Lieutenant William (Bill) Worrall was born in 1915 in Washington state. He has two sisters: Lucile and Kathryn. After his studies at Wenatchee, he leaves for Los Angeles for work. In 1937 he moves to Portland, where he met Charlotte Knauf. He marries her.

Wenatchee is known for its many apple orchards, and the South Limburg landscape must have been very familiar to him. At the age of 27 he joins the army in Portland.

After completing his officer training, in 1943 he was as an infantry lieutenant with the 2nd Armored Division. In May 1943, he leaves for North Africa and arrives in England via Sicily. After the landing in Normandy in 1944 with the Ninth Army through France, Belgium and the Netherlands and in September 1944, lands with his platoon in Hoensbroek, where they were warmly welcomed by the Herinx family.

In November 1944 Bill leaves with his unit to Germany. Chaplain Overhulser has only been with the unit for a short time placed, but has gotten to know Bill as a beloved commander. In the town of Freialdenhoven, just across the border near Ubach-Palenberg, his unit comes under fire by German artillery. In the morning of November 27, the chaplain had another fine conversation with Bill. They joke and have fun. In the afternoon, word comes that Lieutenant Worrall is missing. A patrol is dispatched and they find him in his foxhole. An artillery grenade has struck next to him smashed in.

Through the adoption foundation we get in touch with the adopter of William Worrall and an appointment is made. Rob Doves comes all the way from Zandvoort to get acquainted. Rob tells that he has been in America visiting Nancy - a niece of William - and is in contact with her. He asks if he can show her the pictures from my mother's photo album to her.

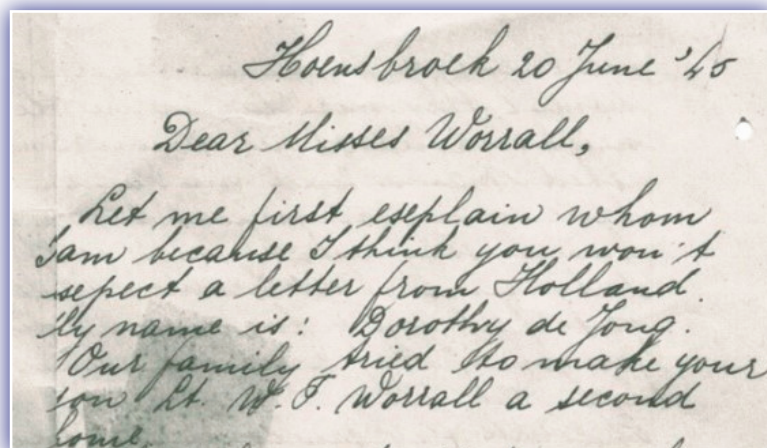


A photo of Bill from the album of Dorothy de Jong

### Letters to "mother" Worrall

After several months, Nancy reports from America. It turns out she still has letters and photographs from my mother! And at the end of June comes that special mail from America.

These are copies of letters that my mother wrote as a 24-year-old woman to the mother of Bill Worrall. The family had promised Bill that she would write to his mother, should anything happen to him. This promise was kept and it is very special to be able to read these letters. My mother died in 1975 at the age of 54 and to receive something personal from her after so many years is very special. For me, every visit to Margraten will never be the same again



Dorothy's letter to Bill's mother

Theo Herinx, Meerssen



# Remember Us

## A new publication by Robert M. Edsel about the adoption program

Robert Edsel is the American author of the New York Times bestseller "The Monuments Men." That book introduces a small group of American and English art experts and specialists who during World War II operated behind front-line troops with the goal of tracking down art treasures looted by the Nazis and ultimately returning them to the rightful owners. This group was also committed to the protection of cultural heritage. Edsel's book was made into a major Hollywood film in 2014 starring world-renowned actors including George Clooney, Matt Damon, Cate Blanchett, John Goodman and Bill Murray.

One of the Monuments Men, Captain Walter J. Huchthausen, was killed on April 2, 1945, and is buried in Margraten. During a meeting with Frieda van Schäik, a dear friend of Captain Huchthausen and the first person to watch over his grave, Edsel learned about the grave adoption program. Stunned not only that such a program existed, but that he had never heard of it, Edsel turned some initial research into a full-blown effort to write an in-depth book about the unique adoption program including some of the men and women buried at Margraten.

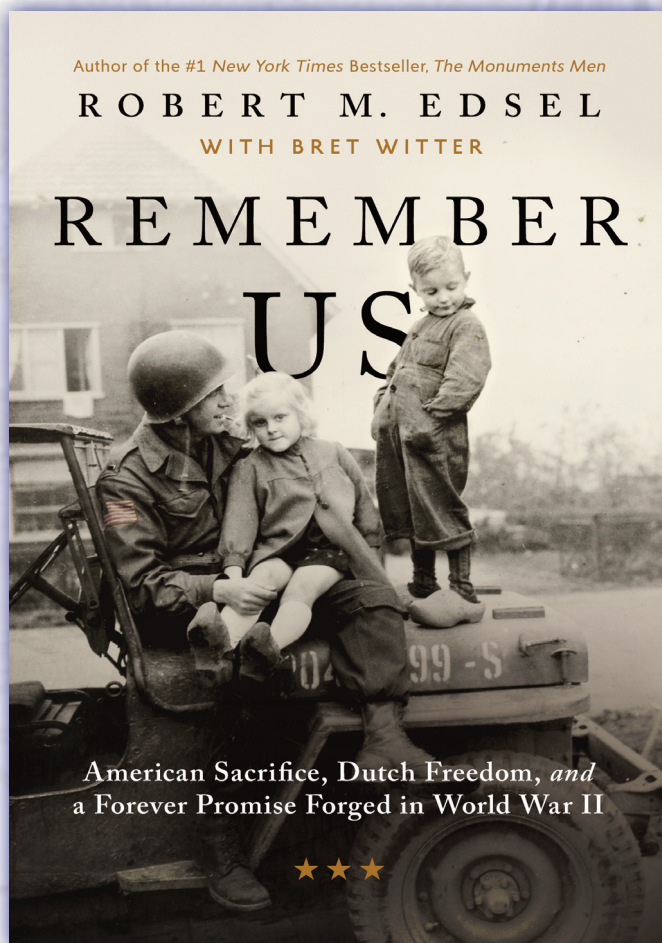
On April 29, 2025, that publication, entitled "Remember Us: American Sacrifice, Dutch Freedom, and A Forever Promise Forged in World War II," will be published in both English and Dutch. The book follows ten Americans, both soldiers and airmen, and shares their personal stories from enlistment through the end of the war. Some survive; others do not, but their experiences all merge in one way or another at Margraten. The book also tells about the commitment of thousands of adopters to preserve the memory of the young men and women who gave their lives for the liberation of Europe. The American Cemetery, as a symbolic preacher of peace, is an impressive place to reflect on the horrors of war.

Edsel and his team of researchers spent eight years unearthing never-before-seen documents and conducting first-person interviews with key figures involved in the earliest days of the adoption program. As a result, many stories that have persisted over the years have been debunked and history set straight.

We need your help to get the story of our grave adoption program to the large-scale audience it deserves. Pre-orders maximize momentum heading into the official launch of REMEMBER US. We encourage you to preorder your copy today on Amazon.com, Amazon.nl, or at your favorite bookstore.

In conjunction with the release of REMEMBER US, the Monuments Men and Women Foundation, which preserves the legacy of these heroes of civilization and the arts, and the adoption foundation have entered into a joint venture called the "Forever Promise Project" ([www.foreverpromise.org/coming-soon](http://www.foreverpromise.org/coming-soon)). After all, in 1945, the residents of Margraten promised to never forget their American liberators thus giving birth to the adoption program. The goal of the project is to reach out to the American public, in particular American relatives of the men and women buried at Margraten, to connect them with their respective adopters. The last page in the book will introduce readers to the "Forever Promise Project" and provide a "call to action" for the families of the American liberators our Foundation watches over.

As a Foundation, we promised Edsel and the Monuments Men and Women Foundation to approach our adopters who are already in contact with relatives of "their" soldier in order to confirm each of those connections and help both organizations in their effort to come as close as possible to connecting each of our Foundation's adopters to a family member of "their" soldier. In order to map these contacts, we ask for your cooperation. In the inserted letter you can read how you can provide us with the requested information. Let us all make sure that this unique collaborative "Forever Promise Project" will be a great success. For this we count on your cooperation. ♦





## Change of Address and Other Contact Information Changes

It is of utmost importance that you inform us about the changes concerning both your home and email addresses. We would also appreciate being notified about any other changes that can be of importance to the adoption register. If you are no longer able to regularly visit the grave or support the name of your adopted soldier, you are requested to inform us at: [info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl) or by contacting:  
Ton Hermes at +31 43 458 3050 (from the U.S.).

## New board member Max van den Boorn introduces himself



Max van den Boorn (27) lives in Eijsden. He works at the regional broadcaster L1 as a reporter for radio, TV and the online channels. In 2024, on behalf of the ABMC, he spent several months as a seasonal guide at the American cemetery in Margraten. In this role, he was allowed to, among other things, conduct tours and family visits guide. He is excited to be a part of the board of the Adoption Foundation. Max will be primarily concerned with the website and newsletter. ♦

## Visit World War II veterans Gratitude and Peace Ceremony 24 May 2025 in the town hall of Margraten

The US non-profit organization Mission Margraten Plus is coming to the Netherlands again this year from 19 May to 26 May! We hope to welcome three WW2 veterans. Their great wish is to be able to meet adopters again and to thank them for their loving care of the graves of their 'Brothers'. Therefore, for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in a row, a Gratitude and Peace Ceremony will be organized on Saturday, 24 May. This is a public event so everyone is welcome, but of course the veterans are hoping for the attendance of as many adopters as possible! This beautiful ceremony will take place in the townhall of the municipality Eijsden-Margraten from 10.30 am to 12.00 am. The veterans will arrive by WW2 vehicles. In addition, a Color Guard will be present and a Bags and Pipe player will play during the ceremony. After the ceremony, there will be a special Meet & Greet reception for 100 invited adopting families. The adopters can meet our WW2 veterans in person. As thanks for the good care of the graves of their 'Brothers', the present adopters will be presented with a symbolic gift in the form of a piece of marble from the hands of the veterans. This unique marble comes from the same quarry where the marble of the crosses and Stars of David at the cemetery in Margraten comes from!

### Gratitude for Donations and Contributions:

The Foundation is most grateful for the donations and contributions that we receive each year from adopters and other benefactors. We thank you all for your generous support! Please be aware, that there are times when we, as a Foundation, have experienced donations being transferred to the wrong bank account number. Your support is very important to us, and we want you to be able to make your donations and contributions with confidence. To best facilitate this, be sure that when you transfer money to include the name of our foundation, Stichting Adoptie Graven Amerikaanse Begraafplaats Margraten (Foundation for Adopting Graves American Cemetery Margraten), your name, address, and this bank account information: IBAN-number: NL89RABO0158820045 (BIC: RABONL2U). Please note that a bank transfer from the United States of America to Europe or to the Netherlands is not an easy option for US citizens. Transfer via PayPal: transfer your monetary donation via the email account [info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl](mailto:info@adoptiegraven-margraten.nl). Sending us a cheque is not a reliable way to transfer monetary donations, because we cannot collect cheques. Also, sending cash is not a recommended solution. ♦

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## Opening Hours Cemetery Margraten

The American Cemetery in Margraten is open to the public 7 days a week from 9 am till 5 pm. Only on December 25 and January 1 the cemetery is closed. On May 4<sup>th</sup>, during the national annual commemoration of the Dutch victims of WWII, the Cemetery also closes at 5 pm. ♦