

2nd Air Division Memorial Library : Our “Dog Tag” Enquiry

This "case" involved an engraved metal dog tag, which was brought to us in late summer 2012 by a local lady, Mrs. Parker, who grew up near the USAAF base at Horsham St. Faith. Her story led Lesley and Kate on quite a search!

Mrs. Parker was a young child during World War II when her family's dog Trixie (a wire-haired terrier) went missing for some time during this period. Trixie later returned home again, pregnant and wearing a lovely little engraved metal tag on her collar reading “PLEASE RETURN TO/ PHO. 8893/ W.R. FREDERICK/ ROXBORO, N.C./ MAY, 1940”:



Sadly, all the puppies subsequently died.

Mrs. Parker's family held onto the tag and cherished it, never knowing for certain how it had ended up on Trixie's collar.

Curious to solve the mystery, and assuming that the Mr. Frederick in question had been an airman based in the vicinity of Mrs. Parker's childhood home, we searched for information about a W. R. Frederick from North Carolina.

We found Lt. W. R. Frederick referenced in the 458th Bomb Group Unit History ***Liberators over Norwich***. He was a pilot of the plane 'Lily Marlene' and was killed along with other crew members on 9 September 1944 (there were two survivors).

After discussing the matter with local 458th historian and co-author of the unit history, Mike Bailey, we agreed that there was good reason to assume that this was the same Lt. Frederick as named on the tag. We know that it was common for US airmen to adopt stray animals that wandered onto base. The tag is marked with the year 1940, years before Lt. Frederick was stationed in Norfolk, but we wondered if perhaps he brought the tag with him to England as a memento from home, and then bestowed it upon the dog who then found her way back to Mrs. Parker's family.

Lesley noticed that a “Rick Frederick” was cited on certain photographs published on the 458th Bomb Group website which were associated with Lt. Frederick and contacted Darin Scorza, American co-author of the unit history, for a way to get in touch with Rick. Although Darin didn't have an up-to-date

email address for Rick, he confirmed that Rick was indeed Richmond Stanfield Frederick, Jr., nephew of William Ransom Frederick, who was killed in action on 9 September 1944. Darin said that he and Rick had corresponded in the past regarding Lt. Frederick's crew photos.

Kate Anderson conducted a series of internet searches in an attempt to find Rick Frederick's current contact information, or that of any other living relative of Lt. Frederick. While doing so, she learned much about Lt. Frederick's military service.

One day in August, she discovered Rick's email address on the website of the Caswell County heritage organization (with which he works actively), and wrote to him. He responded a few days later:

Dear Kate:

Thank you for sharing this interesting story. You have indeed found the family of William Ransom Frederick, and I forwarded your message to relatives. I am not familiar with "PHO 8893." In 1940, Ransom and his wife were living on Academy Street in Roxboro, North Carolina. Hopefully, others will have more information, including whether he had a pet before entering the war.

*We have placed online much of the information we have found on Ransom and his military service...**

He is buried at the Cambridge American Cemetery in Madingley (just outside Cambridge). I lived in England for six years in the early 1980s and visited the grave...He had no children. After Ransom's death, the family lost touch with his widow, Violet Lillian Hayes Frederick. She was a nurse, is believed to have moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, to work with polio patients, and to have remarried. I have searched for her for many years, but without success...

Rick attached photographs of Lt. William Ransom Frederick in uniform and his airplane, the "Lily Marlene." Rick's first cousin (also a nephew of Lt. Frederick) and he were able to "fly" the "Lily Marlene" using a Flight Simulator program.



A scantily clad woman is back-up to **Lily Marlene's** title, while **Shirley's** name under the navigator's "bubble" denotes the wife or girlfriend of one of the nose compartment's occupants. On 9 September 1944 the B-24J-5-FO/42-50907/J3: D crashed near Peterborough; Lt. William R Frederick and six of his eight-man crew were killed.

We were thrilled to have made contact finally with Lt. Frederick's family, and Kate responded to ask if it would be all right to give Mrs. Parker (the local lady who grew up at the air base) his contact details and if we could share this story with our visitors in the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library. After all, much of what we do involves safekeeping and sharing stories like this, which so nicely enrich people's understanding of the local history of the War.

Rick was very happy to let us share the story as we liked, and added that he'd learned from family members that Lt. Frederick was indeed a dog lover. He sent us a photograph of William as a young boy with dogs and one of Lt. Frederick's wife, Violet Lillian Hayes, posing with dogs.



Although we will never know exactly what happened to Trixie whilst she was missing from home, we do think it is very likely that she was adopted by William Ransom Frederick when he was at Horsham. We also think it is very likely that the tag had originally belonged to a beloved dog he had back in the USA. It seems probable that Trixie decided to find her way home again once William Ransom Frederick, her adopted master, failed to show up at the base after the tragic crash.

*To read more about Lt. Frederick, visit this link provided by his nephew:
<http://caswellcountync.org/genealogy/getperson.php?personID=174&tree=tree1>