

THE FACES OF MARGGRATEN

**THEY WILL REMAIN
FOREVER YOUNG**

Fields of Honor Foundation

Authored and edited by Jori Videc, Sebastiaan Vonk,
and Arie-Jan van Hees

Amsterdam
University
Press



Fields of Honor
Foundation

**I HAVE ALWAYS HAD DIFFICULTIES, AND STILL DO, WITH READING
IN THE NEWSPAPER THAT SOLDIERS ‘GIVE THEIR LIVES.’ I REALLY DO
NOT KNOW IF THERE IS ANY SOLDIER WHO REALLY ‘GIVES’ HIS LIFE.
ALL THOSE THOUSANDS OF BOYS IN MARGRATEN HAD THEIR LIVES
TAKEN FROM THEM.**

Jefferson Wiggins, gravedigger at the American Cemetery in Margraten, 1944–1945

© 2022 Fields of Honor Foundation
/ Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam

www.aup.nl
www.fieldsofhonorfoundation.com

1st printing, Dutch, April 2020
2nd printing, Dutch, May 2020
3rd printing (revised), Dutch, August 2020
1st printing, English, November 2022

Cover photo
Staff Sergeant Maurice E. Gosney, 71st Infantry Division.
Buried in Margraten in Plot I, Row 2, Grave 11

Cover design
Erwin Bomans^{BNO} Leucq!, Hof van Twente

Interior design
studio frederik de wal (www.frederikdewal.nl)

Lithography
BFC, Bert van der Horst, Amersfoort

ISBN 978 94 6372 957 4
e-ISBN 978 90 4855 611 3
NUR 689

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the authors of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

CONTENT

- 13 A LASTING MONUMENT IN PRINT
- 17 THE AMERICAN WAR EFFORT IN NORTHWESTERN EUROPE: UNCLE SAM COMES TO THE RESCUE
- 39 THE ONLY AMERICAN CEMETERY IN THE NETHERLANDS
- 51 THE STORIES BEHIND THE NAMES
- 266 EPILOGUE
SINGING BIRDS
- 269 FOREVER GRATEFUL
HONOR ROLL
- 346 GLOSSARY
- 353 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
- 355 THEY REMEMBER
- 357 SOURCES

Portraits P 1 – 8

The numbers refer to
the Honor Roll on P 270 - 343

- P 1. JOHNSON, Vince P ¹⁶⁵
- P 2. LE CURSI, Nicholas A ²¹⁶
- P 3. WHITE, James W ³⁴⁹
- P 4. CHISHOLM, John A Jr ⁸⁰
- P 5. LINDER, Gerard P ²²⁴
- P 6. GARVEY, James A ¹²⁴
- P 7. ADAMS, William H ⁶
- P 8. UTLEY, Walter A ³⁴⁰

- P 12. American soldiers celebrate the surrender of Nazi-Germany on Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), May 8, 1945. SOURCE: Michael Gabriel/Wikipedia



A LASTING MONUMENT IN PRINT

FOREWORD

Maurice Gosney closed his last letter with a promise that he, as it would turn out, sadly was not able to keep: 'That's about all for now. So, I will close for now and write soon. Love, Maurice.' He put these words to paper five days before his death. There would never be another letter. Maurice would never come home again.

During World War II, about 400,000, mostly young, Americans lost their lives. Far from their homes, they became victims of a war that would ultimately cost the lives of tens of millions of people. American soldiers predominantly served and died in North Africa, Italy, (North)western Europe, and the Pacific. Of those who were killed in Europe, about forty percent is buried in or memorialized as missing at thirteen different American military cemeteries across the continent, all administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The Dutch town of Margraten, close to the city of Maastricht and the Belgian-Dutch border, is the site of one of these cemeteries. About 10,000 Americans are either buried at the Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial, or memorialized on the cemetery's two so-called Walls of the Missing. Among them is Maurice. He is buried underneath one of the about 8,300 white marble crosses and Stars of David that have been arranged in wide arches on the green fields.

Before climbing the stairs leading to the graves, visitors will pass through the Court of Honor. Central to the court, right in front of the Memorial tower, is the reflection pond that is headed by the statue of the Mourning Woman. The woman is surrounded by three doves and a new branch growing from a destroyed tree, symbolizing peace and new life. To the average visitor, the female figure will represent the grieving mothers, including those of the 1,722 soldiers memorialized on the two Walls of the Missing that flank the court. The map room highlighting the Allied advance and the cemetery's visitor building are situated along the court as well.

When arriving at the last few steps of the stairs, any visitor is likely to be impressed by the looming sight of all the graves. The seemingly endless rows of headstones serve as a powerful and impressive reminder of the scale of the war. In particular, they highlight the war's toll on mankind.

After that first impression one can easily spend hours walking among the graves. First and foremost, to read the names inscribed on the headstones. However, reading these names will inevitably raise questions. Who were these people? How old were they? What were their stories? These are questions to which the crosses and the Stars of David do not provide answers.

The search for these answers began in 2008. It was then that the first soldier was entered into what is now known as the *Fields of Honor – Database*. Over the years, thanks to many volunteers, it has grown into a virtual memorial that has personal tribute pages for tens of thousands of American soldiers who are buried in or memorialized at American war cemeteries in Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The pages offer a first glimpse into the soldiers' personal lives and their time in the service.

Particularly poignant are the pictures from a time long gone, showing the soldiers posing in their uniforms in a local portrait studio, being surrounded by their family at home, going out with their friends in town, or behind the front lines. As the saying goes: 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' While this obviously is a cliché, it does not mean that it holds less truth. That is why, in 2015, *The Faces of Margraten* were on display at the cemetery for the first time. The 3,300 photographs accompanying the headstones and the Walls of the Missing allowed visitors to emotionally connect to the soldiers on a much more personal level. They were able to look them in the eyes. To some of those who visited the tribute, the soldiers even came, in a way, back to life.



Maurice Gosney together with his father and stepmother.
SOURCE: Gosney family

Since the first time that the faces were on display, the number of photos has continued to increase. Volunteers in the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United States have devoted countless hours of their time to find the faces that are still missing. The ultimate goal: to put a face to every name. We are not there yet. However, at the time of writing this book, there is a photo available for almost 8,500 soldiers. The photos of less than 1,500 soldiers are still missing.

It is in this biennial tribute at the cemetery that this book has its roots. While a picture might be worth a thousand words, it never paints the full picture. Moreover, the photos are only on display at the cemetery for a few days every two years. That is why we have turned to paper to tell the stories behind the pictures. The result is this lasting monument in print to all 10,000 Americans who are either buried or memorialized in Margraten. In our vision, it is a book that is not to be put away on the bookshelf. Rather, the book is deserving of a prominent spot on one's coffee table or in the classroom as a respectful, subtle daily reminder of people who are no longer among us, but to whom we owe our freedom and whose memory still lives on in the hearts and minds of many.

Maurice Gosney is one of the people that this book honors. Thousands of people will now come to know his name. Firstly, because his story is one of the about 250 stories that we tell in this book. These stories shine a light on these soldiers' lives before the war, how their deaths impacted their loved ones, how they are still remembered today, but above all, their time in the service and the moments leading up to their deaths. However, this is not the only way people, including you as a reader, will get to know Maurice. In fact, you have already met him. Maurice covers the front of this book.

Yet, the reality is that for each story we tell, we fail to tell forty others. It is not because those other stories are not as deserving and important, but because they were often simply unknown to us as authors. Even if all 10,000 of them had been known, they would not all have fit into just one single book. The stories in here are therefore at best a randomly chosen reflection of all the stories that could and deserve to be told.

Nevertheless, that does not stop us from continuing to speak the names of each and every soldier who has been either buried or memorialized in Margraten. You will find all 10,000 of them in an impressive, 73-page honor roll that follows after the selection of stories that we have included in the book; hundreds of faces accompany the names. As long as we speak their names, they all will not be forgotten.

The book starts off with a little history lesson. Those who are remembered in Margraten primarily died in Northwestern Europe between 1942 and the months following the German capitulation in 1945. We wish to revisit some of the key battles in this part of Europe at the beginning of this book to provide useful context to the stories of the soldiers that follow. Included in chronological order, the stories reflect the footsteps of the Allies during the final chapter of the war in Europe.

The cemetery itself has a rich history of its own that starts in October 1944, when the current site of the cemetery was still in use as farming land. Over the years, several books and documentaries have captured the history of the site that became the final resting place of close to 8,300 soldiers. So rather than providing a full overview, this book will just briefly recount the hard labor that went into the construction of

the cemetery and highlight the special relationship the site has with the local community up and until this day. It will be enough to understand why Margraten is unique.

What also is unique about memorial sites like Margraten is the power they hold to make us reflect about our own lives and the meaning of concepts like war and freedom. That is why, to us, the stories are not just a tribute to their main protagonists. We hope they will also inspire to do good and, by doing so, uphold the legacy of these American men and women.

But first and foremost, this book is a lasting tribute to them. There is no better way to honor them than to make sure they are not forgotten. As the words on the memorial tower at the cemetery remind us:

Each for his own memorial earned praise that will never die and with it the grandest of all sepulchers. Not that in which his mortal bones are laid, but a home in the minds of men.



The 'Court of Honor' with the statue of the Mourning Woman, the pool of reflection, and the Walls of the Missing.
SOURCE: Kees Verburg/Wikipedia

The Faces of Margraten in May 2018