



Champigny, 17 February, 2020

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Mr. Alec KARNEZIS

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U.S.A.

Dear Alec and Georgia, Angelia and James,

Dear Ivan and Terry,

We were very saddened to learn recently of the passing of Retired *Colonel* Demetrios « Jim » KARNEZIS, at the age of 98.

We are deeply sorry about your loss and express our deepest condolences to your family in my own name and on behalf of the representatives of the town council of the village of Champigny.

It is with some sadness but immense respect that we join today in paying tribute to one of our respected heroes.

That is the least we could do for the former U.S. Air Force officer who was at the controls of B-17F s/n 42-3293 "Slightly Dangerous" during the Stuttgart mission on 6 September 1943.

The bomber slammed into the French countryside at La Chapelle-Champigny. Five men killed by the guns of German Focke-Wulf 190s of fighter wing Jagdgeschwader 2 (JG 2) were still inside (T/Sgt. Jean A. LAWRENCE, S/Sgt. Alvin E. MORRISON, S/Sgt. Ashpy E. SMITH, S/Sgt. Raymond P. SCHWABENBAUER and S/Sgt. George L. LINCOLN).

We owe our freedom and peace to tens of thousands of Americans who helped us through hard times during World War II.

In September 2018, we were so pleased to welcome *Colonel* KARNEZIS in Champigny to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the crash of B-17F "Slightly Dangerous". "Jim" was made honorary citizen of the village of Champigny for his role in liberating France from Nazi Germany. He exactly 25 years ago visited this village for the 50th anniversary of the crash.



Many elderly people immersed themselves in this tragic day of September 1943 when they were children aged 5-10. Remembering how a young pilot far from home could escape such a difficult situation left them speechless. The stories of the escape of *1st Lt.* Demetrios KARNEZIS and *2nd Lt.* John W. GEORGE to England have literally taken our breath away. It was the first time we could learn what happened to them from start to finish. Two of the crewmembers found themselves at the mercy of strangers who helped them to safety through the French Resistance. An incredible story!

We were all touched by the enthusiasm and the excitement of the American families who attended this special event. We were also affected by the coming of the grand-children of *S/Sgt.* Alvin E. MORRISON, P. Lynn BROWN and his brother Russell "Rusty" BROWN. They were so moved by the event and by the opportunity to finally discover their grand-father's last mission over Occupied Europe. Many people were very touched by seeing them.



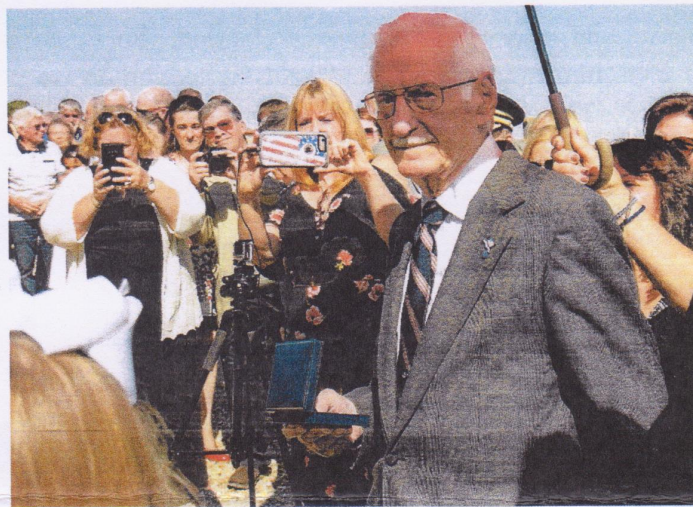
Mrs. Margaret WODA, her husband Larry and daughter Susan came also to represent and pay tribute to their father/grand-father *2nd Lt.* Richard V. LOVELESS. They were familiar to Champigny.

The members of the *S/Sgt.* Raymond P. SCHWABENBAUER family were impressed by discovering Champigny and meeting *Colonel* KARNEZIS.



Thanks to the U.S. ambassador in Paris, Mrs. Jamie MCCOURT, wreath and individual floral arrangements were placed on behalf of the government and people of the U.S.A., in memory of the five crewmen who had fallen in 1943.

People were amazed by your father's contacts and friendly approach. His striking appearance was undoubtedly linked to his status as an accomplished World War II veteran. We discovered a humble man who never once lost his demeanour of cool authority.



Despite the seriousness of this anniversary, he always looked at us with a little smile...

He has always been grateful to the ANDRÉ family at Ferme du Chapitre, a small hamlet North of Champigny. This attitude has remained strong over the years, marking this special link between your family and the ANDRÉ family who saved him.

This connection must continue in the coming years.



We were also lucky to welcome four families (KARNEZIS, LOVELESS, MORRISON and SCHWABENBAER). Children, great-children and cousins of the American airmen could meet.

People from Champigny and surrounding villages (Courlon, Pont-sur-Yonne, Villemanoche, Villeneuve-la-Guyard) were informed and came to visit the exhibition we planned. This was the minimum we owed "Jim". Thanks to the intense historical research done by Mr. Jacques PRUDHOMME and his son Arnaud, we could learn that the B-17 was shot down by the *Major* Egon Mayer, *Geschwaderkommodore* of JG 2, a German ace who had already scored 79 aerial victories.

It was, in any case, a way of showing you how we try year after year to keep the "Spirit of '43" alive, a small campaign to preserve the legacy of this World War II tragedy.

Mr. Gerald LEFLER, Deputy Director of Cemetery Operations for the American Battle Monuments Commission, honoured us by sending an American Honor Guard in the 2018 Ceremony at the Champigny Cemetery.



In 1947, the mayor of Champigny Marcel CORNU stressed that the world was made of trust and hope between peoples after the suffering Europeans have endured under Nazi occupation. He told our elderly what we owed to such young men. Their names were immortalized on the stone monument at the former crash site.



It is, therefore, our duty to keep alive the sacrifice of the crew members of B-17F "Slightly Dangerous" and to preserve the memory of *Colonel KARNEZIS* who was the last survivor of the crew. Like the elderly usually say, *"It was over two generations ago, it was a different world. War is far away."* Let us never forget that fact and show our gratitude.

What could we add? The pictures here speak for themselves. Dear Alec and Ivan, we are all deeply saddened by his passing. We know this is a time of great sorrow for your family.

YOU AND THE OTHERS MUST NEVER FORGET THE CREW OF B-17 "SLIGHTLY DANGEROUS" SO THAT THE TORCH OF REMEMBRANCE CONTINUES TO BURN BRIGHTLY.

Please be assured of our continued friendship.

With all due respect,

Mr. Michel GUILLON-COTTARD

Mayor of Champigny



Mr. René FOUÉ

Second Deputy Mayor