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Tom Dougherty

(Stories 31,32,33,34)

(Died Jan 17, 2002)

OPTION # 2

(O.K. to Check-out but not to be copied)

“Let Me Put Madeline On The Line”

First Meeting In 47 Years

“I discovered what God has known from the beginning, that a child born out of wedlock is every bit as precious in His eyes as the one born of parents with benefit of clergy.”

With those words imbedded in his mind after living for 47 years with the knowledge that he had left an unborn child in England when the war was over, Tom Dougherty returned to England last summer to meet the daughter he fostered, but had never met.

“On September 9, 1992, my dream came true when we met for the first time at the Rose & Crown Hotel in Baldock,” said Dougherty.

“It was love at first sight,” he continued. “There are no words to describe the feelings that enveloped us. She was so loving and caring, and truly happy that her real father wanted to find her.

“And the father was so happy that his daughter wanted him to find her.”

Dougherty came to England with the first contingent of 398th Bomb Group airmen, being a waist gunner on the Harold Woodson crew of the 602nd Squadron. Others on the crew were Richard Morauer, Peter Mullin, Raymond (Mal) Turner, Gerald Dixon, Solomon (Sol) Waslow, Russ Spear, Cecil (Tex) Moore and George Shoptaw.

Gunner Returns To England To Find His “Precious” Daughter

Dougherty’s luck with women had not been all that successful even before leaving Rapid City, where the 398th trained combat crews before departing for Nuthampstead and Station 131. A hasty, ill-advised marriage ended in annulment. And subsequently, a 16-year marriage begun in 1947 also would be dissolved.

The only child he had after all these years was the daughter he fathered in England with “Molly” from Baldock.

With every intention of bringing Molly and his baby to the United States after the war, Dougherty nevertheless could not generate enough extra money with his regular and part-time jobs to send for them.

“Things were not turning out the way I had hoped,” he said. “The weeks and months passed and Molly apparently lost hope. In her last letter she informed him that ‘It is over.’ I continued to write, but then a letter came from her mother saying that Molly ‘had made other plans.’ ”

Thoughts of his daughter continued in Dougherty’s mind throughout the coming years. Finally, with the encouragement of the woman he married in 1966, Dawne, he began thinking seriously of trying to locate his offspring, who was born in the fall of 1945. Still, he reasoned, would she be interested in his coming on the scene after all these years? Had Molly even told her about her American father? Did he have the right to break into someone’s life in this manner? Could he even locate her? So many questions!

“Your daughter should be the one to decide if she wants a relationship with you,” offered Dawne. “Find her and ask her.”

With that encouragement, plus all the news coming out on the 50th anniversary of the 8th Air Force celebrations being planned in England during 1992, Dougherty — now 70 — decided “It’s now or never.” And the search began.

I made contact with numerous organizations who located servicemen’s children and relatives. I sought help from a group called ‘Trace.’ No luck at all.

“Finally, I decided to place a ‘personals’ newspaper ad and contacted a publisher at Hitchin. I also wrote a letter to ‘Resident’ at Molly’s old address in Baldock. Unbelievably, Molly’s sister, Rosemary, still lives there.



THE 398TH MEMORIAL at Nuthampstead was the perfect place for a reunion between Tom Dougherty and the daughter he left unborn after completing his tour as a gunner on the Harold Woodson 602 crew. After 47 years he traced his daughter to Hitchin via a “personals” newspaper ad. After getting together at Hitchin, the two drove to Station 131 to view the memorial ... and exchange more memories. Dougherty found that his daughter, named Madeline Maxwell, was “precious.”

“Rosemary also received calls from two others who had seen the newspaper ad. Her first call was to Brian Maxwell of Baldock, who just happened to be married to Dougherty’s daughter, whose name is Madeline.

“Maxwell called me with the news that he was my son-in-law. And also that I had two grand children! He said that he would tell Madeline all this startling news ‘when the time was right.’ A few days later he called again and said, ‘Let me put Madeline on the line.’ ”

“We talked for an hour, and finally we made a date to meet in person on September 9 in Baldock.

“It had taken 47 long years, but I found my daughter. And she is precious.”

A second meeting in Oregon, 1993

