



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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Letts man and Community featured in French Newspaper

By Mary Masonholder Wilson

If you were to open a copy of the French Newspaper, *La Nouvelle Republique*, on May 10, 2013, you would see a picture of Letts City Council member Jim Thompson receiving a souvenir plaque from Reungy, France, delivered by Daniel Sellier of that town. Sellier was in Letts, Iowa on April 13th, 2013, to give a presentation on Major Lawrence Herrick, who grew up in Letts, but died over the town of Reungy on August 5, 1944 during World War II.

As reported in this newspaper before, Herrick was a pilot who blew up a locomotive used to bring in German supplies to that area. To the citizens of this small French community, Herrick was a hero. However, it must be said that the heroes were also the members of the community who cared for Herrick's body, and defied the Germans by having a funeral service for the deceased American pilot and continuing to bring flowers to his grave despite German objections.

Last year the town of Reungy, France placed a plaque commemorating Herrick at the base of their town war memorial. Richard Herrick and Mary Wilson of Columbus Junction attended that ceremony. This year the Herrick family, which included Richard and Mary and also Larry Herrick and his wife Bernie of Sammamish, Washington, returned to France for the May 8th ceremony, which is "Victory in Europe Day", and is observed each year on this date.

The Herrick family knew there would be no observance of Lawrence Herrick this year, but just wished to attend the ceremony and to see their French friends. What the Herrick family did not know is that this year, following the ceremony, there would be a special luncheon for Daniel Sellier to report to city officials and dignitaries of his trip to the United States and his presentation in Letts, Iowa.

The Herrick family was invited to this luncheon. Sellier gave his report in both French and English so the Herrick family could understand. It was a real thrill to listen to him tell about his day in Letts, Iowa. He was very complimentary to the people and the town. He was greatly moved by the memorial moments in the Letts cemetery at the grave of Herrick and the town's all-war memorial. The salute from the Ameri-

can Legion there brought even more solemnity to the occasion and the words of reverence spoken by Marsha Gerot gave honor to all service men.

Sellier went on to say he felt so warmly greeted by the people of Letts and this made him feel at ease. He really enjoyed talking to many of the citizens before and after the presentation. He joked on May 8th as he gave his report to the people of Reungy, "There were 150 people there that day in Letts, and I think I shook the hand of all of them!" Sellier was also shocked at how many people he met there were friends of Lawrence Herrick in Herrick's earlier years. Sellier in seriousness said, "I could tell following the presentation by the number of people who had tears in their eyes that they each remembered the story of their loved ones who may have been lost at war, or maybe it was a feeling for all veterans and the sacrifices that had been made for people to live in freedom. Whichever the case, the emotions were there."

Reungy Mayor, Bernard Bardin, appreciated Sellier giving the presentation in the Letts community and acting as an ambassador for the small French town. Reungy city officials and other attendees at the luncheon were delighted that the two small communities have become connected. At the Reungy town war memorial where the May 8th ceremony took place, the World War II memorial American flag from the Letts cemetery and presented to Sellier by Thompson while here, was placed that day at the head of Lawrence Herrick's memorial plaque there. It was a real tribute to see the American flag flying next to the French flag.

After leaving Letts this past April, Sellier flew to Phoenix, Arizona to meet with the World War II General of Lawrence Herrick, General Seth McKee, who is still alive and 97 years old. McKee remembered Herrick well and spoke very highly of him, mentioning that he was grooming Herrick to take over that division when he (McKee) had to report back to headquarters.

It was very heartwarming to be in Reungy, France and hear the report on Letts, Iowa. Sellier showed the signed quilt, a gift given to him by the Letts people, and the koozies given by the Letts Fire Department. He told of the beef jerky given to him by Jake Shoppa and all the wonder-

ful refreshments served by the Letts Library group. Sellier threw up his hands as he told of the Ardon Creek Winery owned by Mike and Diane O'Toole saying, "Can you believe there is a winery in Letts, Iowa?! And it's not bad wine either!"

All in all, it was obvious that Frenchman Daniel Sellier had had a grand time in Letts, Iowa, and he would like to come again.

As I conclude this article and the saga of Lawrence Herrick, I want to again thank all veterans for what they have given us, and may we all this post Memorial Day weekend reflect on the sacrifices that have been made for us. It continues to amaze me that other countries do indeed know that OUR country fought for THEIR country. There were two evidences of this that brought tears to my eyes in France last week. One was I was shopping in a town in France that we had gone to stay because it was near the Normandy Beaches. In the window of one store, it read in English, "Welcome to our Liberators."

The other example happened at the ceremony in the town square in Reungy. This ceremony is very solemn; much as is our Memorial Day ceremony, and their town band plays every year the French National anthem. The Reungy mayor announced that the French National Anthem would be played and so would the United States National Anthem. The band started to play, and I did not put my hand on my heart because I ASSUMED it would be the French anthem first. However, in a matter of four notes I knew it was the US anthem being played first and the French one came afterwards. I was shocked. Later I found out this rearrangement of the anthems was very unusual, was a tribute to us, and permission from "higher ups" had to be obtained to even do this.

America, France is reaching out to YOU! Accept this gratitude and be glad in it. (Copies of the French newspaper article and photos will be left in both the Columbus Junction Public Library and the Letts Library.)

Epilogue: In all my articles, there is one organization and three people especially that I have not mentioned enough. The organization is FORCED LANDING. Without this group, we would never have found Reungy, France and have come to know this story of Lawrence Herrick. If you remember from past articles, it was FORCED LANDING and a man named Jay Jones that my brother,



The World War II memorial USA flag presented by the city of Letts as it now flies in Reungy, France at the head of the plaque for American pilot Lawrence Herrick.

Richard Herrick, first contacted to begin his search for his father's crash site and details of the last moments of the young pilot's life. It was FORCED LANDING who put out all the details in search of the information, and it took a while to find it, but find it they did. (If you remember, it was a 16-year-old boy in Reungy who kept an historical blog on his town who happened to come across the request by Forced Landing and then united the French side with the US side.) It was a man from Forced Landing named Jean Pierre who pieced this "puzzle" together. Then it was a man named Charles Diepple who illustrated and wrote much of a book on Lawrence Herrick with side information on World War II along with Yann Deniau who studied the French Archives, collected information, and photographs. This book was printed in French, and only two copies were done in English. These two copies were presented to Richard and Larry Herrick last year. However, this year, it has been made known to us that more copies in English can be printed. I plan to order some of the books. If anyone else would like a copy, leave your name and money at the GAZETTE office. (Amount will be printed later; however, I believe the price to be in the \$30 range.) I will probably place this order in two weeks. Thank you Mr. Pierre, Mr. Diepple, and Mr. Deniau. Thank you Letts, Iowa. Thank you all Veterans.

Briefly -

Alumni Banquet schedule

The Columbus High School Alumni Banquet will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2013, at the Roundy Elementary School. Registration and social hour at 5:30 p.m., followed by the meal and program. Advanced tickets may be purchased at both local banks. The 50-Year Class of 1963 and the 25-Year Class of 1988 will be honored. The 50-Year Class will be touring the new school facilities at 4:00 p.m. Other alumni attending the Banquet may join the tour by meeting at 4:00 p.m. in the High School parking lot.

Volunteers needed to remove flags

Volunteers are needed to help take down the flags at the Columbus City Cemetery today, Wednesday, May 29th at 5:00 pm (weather permitting). If you have any questions, please call Mike Lowe at 319-212-1358. All volunteer help will be greatly appreciated.

Conesville Blood Drive

The Conesville Revitalized Fun Fest will host a community blood drive from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on Saturday, June 8th located at Conesville Community Center/City Hall, 306 3rd Street, Conesville. To donate, please contact Rosa Perez at 563-272-9071. Walk-ins welcome! Donor Eligibility Criteria: Potential donors must be at least 17 years of age (16 with parental permission form available through www.bloodcenter.org) and weigh more than 110 pounds. A photo I.D. or MVRBC Donor Card is required to donate. To schedule an appointment for donation, please call the Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center at (800) 747-5401. Donors who last gave blood on or before 4/13/2013 are eligible to give blood at this drive.

Flood Reunion

Save the Date - The Columbus Firemen are scheduling a flood reunion for the community. The proposed date is set as Saturday June 15th. If you have any unique photos that you would like to share let the firemen know. More information will follow in later issues.

Relay for Life Schedule

The 2013 Louisa County Relay for Life will be on Saturday, June 15, 2013, at the Wapello Football Field from 5-11 p.m. Opening Ceremony begins at 6:00 p.m. We are having a birthday party to help American Cancer Society celebrate their 100th birthday! Come help us celebrate with cupcakes and beverages. Other food and drink items will be for sale. We will celebrate and honor our survivors and take time to remember those who have lost the battle. We will have a pie auction, a silent auction and many other activities. Purchase a luminaria bag to honor a cancer survivor or in memory of somebody that has lost their battle. These bags will be placed around the track and lit at dusk. What an awesome sight! Celebrate - Remember - Fight Back!

Legion to honor 50 and 60 year members

The American Legion will honor new 50 and 60 year members on June 4th at 7:00 p.m. Post 100 will have a short ceremony to honor the new members before the regular Legion meeting. New 50 year members are Del Evans and Jim Morrison. Art Pugh will be honored as a new 60 year member. Family and friends are invited to attend.

Letts Fest

The City of Letts will be holding its second annual Letts Fest on June 29th. The community is looking for vendors, and participants in the parade and car show. If interested, please contact Jake Shoppa at 563-571-4561; Monica Bieri at 319-212-1613; or Joy Murphy at 319-330-6063 and 319-726-3052.

Chapter CX P.E.O. to meet

Chapter CX P.E.O. will meet on June 3 at the home of Cristin Wellington. The co-hostess will be Faye Fedlam and the State Convention Report will be given.

Methodist Women to meet

The U.M.W. of Columbus Junction will meet in the church for a 12:30 pm. salad luncheon on June 5, 2013. Devotions - Marilyn Thomas. Guest speaker - Shirley Samuels, District Shepherdess. Please bring a salad to share and a love gift for the offering. Hostesses - Marlys Austin and Florence Harbison.

New at Your Library

Happy, Happy, Happy - Phil Robertson; DVD Season 1 Duck Dynasty from A&E; Stolen by not Lost - Janet Tombow; Watch Out of Miracles - Janet Tombow.

Summer Reading Program is right around the corner! For preschool to 3rd Grade story times: Tues. June 11, 10-11am - We are the Dinosaurs!; Tues. June 18, 10-11am - Creepy Carrots!; Fri. June 21, 10-11am - Red Cross Program for Kids!; Tues. June 25, 10-11am - Those Darn Squirrels!; Tues. July 2, 10-11am - Dragons Love Tacos!; Tues. July 9, 10-11am - Magpies!; Tues. July 16, 10-11am Tadpoles and Frogs!; Thurs. July 25 11am - Mississippi Valley Puppet Show.

Read for prizes 4th - 9th grade - keep track of number of pages read and win an Ipod Touch! Pick up forms at the Library. Adults can read and win a gift certificate to use at our Farmer's Market.

We have lots of new books and series in that should be of interest to everyone!

Keeping Columbus Beautiful

Two area men, Jesus and Eusebio Reuteria, took their own initiative and cleaned the Community Park on Thursday morning. Both work at Tyson and decided to help make our town a cleaner place.



That's why Columbus Junction is a great place to live!

Emergency siren placed



Last Friday, Musco Lighting installed the new siren, across the street from the Civic Center. It should be in use in about a week and a half, after state inspectors have tested the siren.

Memorial Day Celebrated



An inspiring Memorial Day service was held last Monday morning. The Columbus High band was on

hand to perform the National Anthem and other patriotic music. The wreath of the Unknown Soldier was placed on the cemetery.

Rev. James Braden addressed the crowd and spoke of the purpose of Memorial Day and urged everyone to

observe a moment of silence at 3:00 p.m. in memorance of those that have lost their lives in defense of our freedoms. He also spoke of the importance of everyone's right to exercise their religious beliefs and the their duty to defend the Constitution of the United States of America.

The program ended with the playing of taps in memory of those who have passed on defending these rights and their service to our country.

How to help Oklahoma Tornado Victims

The best way to help Oklahoma tornado victims is to give cash or gift cards. This enables people in Oklahoma to buy EXACTLY what they need and helps their local economy in the process. **There are several ways you can get this done today:** Give \$10 RIGHT NOW from your mobile device you can text the word **FOOD** to the number 32333 (You

will receive follow up texts back to explain the process); Your own church or civic organization may be making group donations (UMCOR for the Methodist Church for instance and Lions International for the Lions); The Red Cross has already set up a fund just for this disaster called **Oklahoma Relief**. Write out your check to: Oklahoma Relief, Channel 9, 7401 N. Kelley Avenue in Oklahoma City, OK 73111; Or to Moore Emergency Management, 301 N. Broadway, Moore, OK 73160. To learn more about donating during disasters here are some great links: <http://m.fema.gov/get-involved>; <http://www.fema.gov/volunteer-donate-responsibly>.

