

A unique friendship

War made them enemies, but a quest for peace instilled a lasting relationship

"We are united in remembrance of those that sacrificed so much, so many lost that day, so much tragedy, this memorial is testament to that day and a new hope.

The Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association was founded in 1975 to honor the memory of those men who lost their lives on October 14, 1943.

This joint venture memorial founded by men who were once foes, not by choice, but by circumstances, who joined together as friends, dedicated to make a statement to future generations, that mistakes of the past by all nations must be heeded, if they are to be avoided in the future.

As Hubert Neidhart wrote and I quote 'The Memorial: It is not a glorification of war, not an appeal for hero-worship, but simply a quiet, modest warning, reminding us of a fateful past.'

And in closing, I think it is appropriate to quote from Georg Schaefer's remarks this date in 1998, 'To all these people, regardless of their nationality, this memorial should serve as a sign of goodwill, forgiveness and friendship and be a memento for the generations to come, to work and live towards peace amongst all men.'

With these thoughts we place our wreath here in remembrance of all who were affected that day and our passion to work and live towards peace, to truly be, Friends by Choice."

— Speech read by Robert McCaleb during wreath ceremony on October 14, 2013, at Schweinfurt

The day was October 14, 1943, one that would be remembered as a tragedy during World War II but later become a focus for peace and reconciliation.

Joplin native H. Kenneth McCaleb, '41, was 23 and a navigator on a B-17 plane with a mission to bomb the city of Schweinfurt, Germany. His plane, along with 18 other bombers, took off from Thurleigh Airfield in England and was shot down between Würzburg and Schweinfurt, Germany. Survivors became prisoners of war. During the raid, the Americans lost 600 men and 60 airplanes. The city of Schweinfurt lost 1,079 people from 1943-45.

McCaleb survived and returned to Joplin and raised a family with his wife, Margaret Baughman McCaleb, '40, but he never forgot the agonies of war and his experience as a prisoner. His hope was that all men could live in peace.

His son Robert McCaleb and his wife, Patti, traveled to Europe for a wreath ceremony on October 14, 2013, at the memorial dedicated in remembrance of American and German victims. It was the 70th anniversary of McCaleb's plane being struck down.

Known as the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association, the memorial was founded in 1975 and in 1998 became a joint venture between two groups that once fought against each other.

The two sides of this dedication were the Allied soldiers and the German Luftwaffenhelfer, who were German students drafted into the German army at a young age, some only 15.

The memorial is meant to speak to future generations to prevent similar tragedies from happening again. Robert McCaleb quoted the sculptor of the memorial Hubert Neidhart when he spoke at the wreath ceremony, which honored those who sacrificed and to raise awareness for peace.

Robert and Patti McCaleb also paid tribute to the late H. Kenneth McCaleb at the opening of the Exhibit of Schweinfurt Air War, remembering the reason his parents began the Missouri Southern McCaleb Initiative for Peace, which awards grants to students to report and write on ways to ensure peace in the world. Their work is published in *The Chart*, Missouri Southern's student newspaper, which the elder McCaleb founded in 1939 while a student at Joplin Junior College.

The McCalebs were the only Americans present at the anniversary. During the opening ceremony, Robert spoke of the unique relationship his father had with German Georg Schaefer, with whom he became friends years after the war.

"... The wonderful lesson for today is the story of reconciliation as demonstrated by the Schaefer's and my parents and by the many other Flakhelfer and SSMA members who reconciled, became friends, and dedicated this monument ... their proclamation of 'enemies by chance, friends by choice' should be widely publicized," said Robert.

For the remainder of the McCalebs' visit, the couple toured the crash sites of the Iron Maiden and of his father's plane, met



Patti McCaleb, left, and Robert McCaleb found time to reminisce and visit with Ruth Schaefer in Schweinfurt, Germany. The McCalebs traveled to Germany for a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary that Robert's father, H. Kenneth McCaleb, '41, was in a plane shot down during World War II.

with former Luftwaffenhelfer, and the Lord Mayor Sebastian Remelé of Schweinfurt. President of the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association Rob Klint, who wasn't able to attend, addressed the memorial through a written speech read by Robert McCaleb, assuring that the efforts from both sides for peace were being achieved.

"We humbly remember the tragedies of the air war over Schweinfurt that occurred 70 years ago," wrote Klint. "It is especially remarkable with the tragedies that occurred, these men, once foes not by choice, but by circumstances while doing what they were called upon to do, became friends. They once fought against each other in an impersonal physically abstract battle with the 'hope' that someday they, their children and their children's children could live in peace." **E**

— Sydney Marsellis, '14



Robert McCaleb also visited with former Luftwaffenhelfer at the memorial and at the Exhibit of Schweinfurt Air War, including Gottfried Hohenberger (above) and Bernhard Merk (right). Robert attended the service to honor his father, H. Kenneth McCaleb, who was a prisoner of war in Germany during World War II. The experience led the elder McCaleb to work for ways to encourage a peaceful world.

— All photos courtesy of Robert McCaleb

