

G.I Brides of the 448th

With exotic accents, smart uniforms, and a ready supply of chocolate, chewing gum and nylon stockings, the air of Hollywood glamour that the American GIs brought, caused a sensation amongst the young war-weary British women. Local girls were often invited to dances held in airbase hangars. Here they learnt jitterbugging and listened to big bands and American jazz. Often, top musicians were flown in to entertain the personnel, and famous celebrities such as Glen Miller and Bing Crosby topped the bill. It was inevitable amid these unique circumstances that flirtation turned to romance and love blossomed. Many GIs married their British sweethearts – often in haste.

By the end of the war there were over 70,000 GI brides. Some of these marriages ended in tragedy before the end of the war but those who didn't, The War Brides Act allowed them to enter the United States as non-quota immigrants. Many left Britain to start a whole new life in America and often leaving families behind and never seeing them again.

Most brides had to travel by sea. Conditions on board ship were a matter of luck. It was all right (though crowded) on the Queen Mary, but some of the smaller ships were totally unsuitable. For example on board the Saturnia, a captured Italian warship the children started to become sick and die. A Dr Weinstein diagnosed the ailment as "summer diarrhoea" and reassured the New York Times that there was no danger to New York City children.

As the ships arrived in New York harbour they were met by a tug with a band playing "Sentimental Journey" or "Roll Out The Barrel". Some brides found their husbands waiting for them; others received telegrams saying "Your services are no longer required" or discovered that they'd already been divorced. They were sent straight back to England before they've even had a chance to find out what America was like.

For those lucky enough to be accepted into the USA, they found very quickly that they would have to adopt a totally new and foreign way of life. Here they were, many thousands of miles away from their old family and friends, with a man they barely knew out of uniform and in a place they did not know. Some struggled with the isolation of life in rural America, or found their heroic soldier was less appealing once he was returned to Civvy Street. But most persevered, determined to turn their wartime romance into a lifelong love affair, and prove to those back home that it really was possible to have a Hollywood ending.

Here we share some of the stories from the GI Brides of the 448th Bomb Group.

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Joyce Wilkerson & Franklin Copp - 10th February 1945



Franklin Russell Copp who was a crew chief for the 715th Squadron married Joyce Clara Wilkerson in St. Augustine's Parrish church, Norwich on 10th February 1945.

Franklin Russell Copp was born on the 12th October 1919 in Eagle Grove, Iowa to John Franklin (b1886) and Mary Margaret Johnson (b1892) Copp. Franklin had two brothers and four sisters.

Joyce Clara Wilkerson was born on the 27th September 1924 in Norwich to Ernest and Eliza Clara Critten Wilkerson.

Franklin met Joyce Wilkerson in Norwich at the City Arms Pub only a week after he was stationed at Seething 146 and they hit it off straight away! After courting for some time, Franklin proposed to Joyce at her family home.

It was cool and cloudy on their wedding day, and Joyce wore a heavy white brocade gown that she had borrowed. Dan Savage who was also stationed at Seething was Franklin's best man. Joyce's sister, Doris and her friend, Vera Carriage were bridesmaids.

On the 11th June 1945 Franklin returned to Windsor Locks, Connecticut, U.S as a passenger on a B24 Aircraft #44-50859, piloted by 1st Lt. Albert B Sanders. He was Honourable discharged on the 11th October 1945.

Joyce came over to New York on the 23rd March 1946 aboard the Holbrook. On the 4th January 1947 they had a son Barry L - who followed his father footsteps and became an aircraft maintenance specialist.

In 1948 they moved to Hermiston, Oregon and Franklin worked at the Umatilla Ordnance Depot. They then had a daughter, Doris on the 24th March 1949 but Joyce was homesick so they moved back to England in 1949 intending to stay. Franklin worked for Caley's chocolate factory but the English housing situation in Norwich was not to their satisfaction so they went back to Eagle Grove, Iowa, U.S. Franklin and his son Barry travelled back to New York in March 1953 on the ship Veendam. Joyce and Doris returned in 1954.

On 20th March 1956 Franklin and Joyce welcomed another son Lynn to the world. Franklin worked for Boone Valley Cooperative a soybean processing plant in Eagle Grove for 28 years, retiring in 1981 as a Production Superintendent.

Joyce passed away on 30th May 1978 in Rochester, Minnesota and was cremated. Franklin and Doris took her ashes back to England and she had her last rites in St Augustine's Parish Church – the same church they were married in and laid to rest in Horsham St Faith, Norfolk, England.

Franklin passed away on 15th April 2010 in Clarion, Iowa, USA. Franklin's ashes are laid to rest in the two places he called home – at Horsham St Faith to be next to Joyce and at Eagle Grove to be near his family.



Joan May Moore & Reo Viri Hunt - 20th March 1945



Cpl. and Mrs. Reo V. Hunt, who took nuptial vows in Seething, England. She was Miss Joan May Moore.

Joan May Moore was born on the 19th January 1927 in Loddon, Norfolk to Alfred John (b.1898) and Hilda May Hupton (b.1900) Moore and she had a sister, Molly.

Reo Viri Hunt was born on the 12th March 1917 in Aurora, Sevier, Utah to Andrew (b.1896) and Olive Rozanna Curfew (b.1897) Hunt. He had two brothers Loyd George (b.1921) and Kay Lamoyne (b.1925).

In 1920, Reo's family was living in Castle Dale, Emery, Utah. On the 26th March 1938, when Reo was 21 years old, he married Wilma Locke at Green River, Emery, Utah. In April 1939, they had a daughter, Deon, but they later divorced.

By 1940 Reo was living back home with his parents.

On the 11th August 1942, Reo enlisted in Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City and was given the service number 39830040. He was noted as divorced with dependents and his occupation was noted as semiskilled chauffeurs and drivers.

Reo trained to become an aircraft and engine mechanic and in July 1943 he gained his wings before being sent to his post of duty at Laredo, Texas. By August 1943 he was promoted to Cpl and transferred to Salt Lake City. In September 1943, Reo was transferred to Sioux City, Iowa. He was assigned to the 714th Bomb Squadron. Meanwhile, Joan was studying at school and left in 1944. Reo and Joan met at a dance in Seething. They courted and on the 20th March they got married at St. Margaret's Church in Seething.

Joan wore a white gown of watered taffeta with a fingertip veil and carried a bouquet of red carnations. The bridesmaids, Molly (Joan's sister) and Gillian Royal, wore powder-blue satin gowns and carried multi-coloured carnations with violets, tulips, daffodils and spring flowers. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Donald Patrick McClenagahn.



Walter Stauffer, a fellow member of the 448th Bomb Group attended Joan and Reo's wedding relates "*The GIs sat on one side and the local gentry on the other. One of our men was delegated to pump the organ and he picked a solemn moment to sneak a peek from behind the organ. The sight of him peeking around sent us into a burst of giggles, much to the displeasure of the vicar*".

By the 30th August 1945 Reo was back in the states and had received his honourable discharge. He had earned the Good Conduct and European Theatre of Operations ribbons with three battle stars. Joan was still in England and pregnant with their first child. Shirley Karen was born in November 1945.



Joan and Shirley left England aboard the Queen Mary ship for the U.S on 24th February 1946. After they arrived, they then got a train to Salt Lake City where Reo was waiting to meet them. It was the first time Reo met his daughter. She was 4 months old. A few days later the family set off for Hanksville to set up their home.

Joan and Reo had more children, Carl Alford (b.1947), Fern Lacaе (b.1949), Molly Margaret (b.1950), Trudy Ann (b.1953), and Keith Leroy (b.1958).

Reo was an entrepreneur. Before the war he had a ranch which he returned to after the war and was heavily involved in the farming side. He became a buffalo game warden. He also built and owned a motel. He was president of a water company – The Hanksville Canal Co. Reo and his brother Loyd were also involved in the development of uranium mining. In 1960 he opened a Chevron station on highway 24. He even owned a gem collection. In 1973 he was employed at the oil rig at Sam's Mesa with his son Carl. Reo certainly was a Jack of all trades.



In December 1960, Reo's eldest daughter Deone married Eddie Young.

Shirley married Lewis Wilcox and had a daughter, Sherry Marie in March 1964 and by December 1968 they had two more daughters. They moved to California. In April 1971 they had a son. By 1982 Shirley and Lewis were grandparents, and Reo and Joan were great grandparents.

In March 1969 Carl married Janice Jean Harding. By April 1976 they had two sons and a daughter. By 1991 they too had become grandparents.

In March 1968 Molly married Larry B. Keaton in Illinois and set up home there. In June 1969 they were living in Michigan and gave birth to their son, Robert Cal.

Fern worked with her father Reo in the garage while she was growing up. In July 1969 she was chosen as Miss Hansville during the July 4th celebrations. By 1974 she was married to Ted Morrison.

In April 1978 Trudy married Tom Hansen and had a son in October 1978 and another son in 1982.

The war brought together two people who would never have met, and because of this chance meeting, generations of people have been created that would never have been here.

Reo passed away on the 26th April 2002 and is buried in Hanksville Cemetery, Utah. Joan passed away on the 2nd June 2013 and is buried with him.

Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Spall & Edward Martin Wall – 20th May 1945



Firstly before we start this story I would like to thank Dan Cline and Janey McQuality for their help with the research. Dan has done extensive background work to help piece Mary and Edward's story. Also between Dan and Janey they have also helped piece Edward's crew story which is a whole separate story. Many thanks Dan and Janey for your tireless work.

Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Spall was born on the 2nd June 1927 in Ipswich, Suffolk, England to Charles and May Mumford Spall. By 1940 Mary and her family were living in Wrentham, Suffolk.

Edward Martin Wall Jr was born on the 31st August 1916 in Newark, New Jersey to Edward T (b.1890) and Eleanor Manning (b.1896) Wall. Edward Jr had 3 sisters, Eileen J (b.1917), Jean (b.1925), and Nancy (b.1930) and 2 brothers Jack (b.1915) and John (b.1920).

In 1920, Edward's family were living in Newark, Essex County, New Jersey with Eleanor's family. Edward Sr. occupation was a checker at Army Base. In 1929 Edward Jr finished school at Bennett School and went to Boston Public Latin School.

By 1930 the family was living in Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. By now Edward Sr was a self employed Trucker. In 1936 Edward graduated from Boston Public Latin School and headed to Harvard and was a classmate to John F Kennedy.

In 1940 Edward Sr was not living with the family (and in 1944 he and Eleanor would be divorced). He was living with his father and sister in Amesbury, Essex County, Massachusetts. The rest of his family were still living in Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts. Eleanor was now head of the family and Eleanor's father was living with them as well as two lodgers. Edward Jr was noted as working as a loader in the trucking industry.



On the 16th October 1940 Edward was drafted while he was studying at Harvard Law School. On the 30th December 1941 Edward enlisted at Boston. It was noted he had 4 years of college and his occupation was Actor. He was given the service number 11038137.

Edward attended the flying school at Ocala in Florida then in September 1942 he was at the Greenville Army Flying School, Greenville, Missouri. On the 13th December 1942 he received his silver wings and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant at George Field, Illinois. His service number was 0795106.

Edward flew B17s and submarine patrol duty before transferring over to B24s

Edward was assigned to the 489th Bomb Group based at Station 365, Halesworth, England. On the 8th March 1944 he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and then on the 30th August 1944 he was promoted to Captain. Edward met Mary when she accompanied her mother on a visit to Station 365, Halesworth. They were introduced to each other and hit it off right away. They became engaged.

The 489th Bomb Group were based at Halesworth until November 1944 and it then redeployed its personnel. Edward was due to go back to the U.S to train on the B29s. However, he applied to remain in the UK to complete his combat tour. On the 17th November 1944 Edward and his crew were transferred to the 448th Bomb Group, Station 146, Seething, England.



During his time at Halesworth he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

By January 1945, Edward was planning to marry Betty, but sadly on the 13th January 1945 he was shot down on a mission to Worms, Germany. Betty had no idea if he was alive or dead. The information they had was that the plane went down on fire and no chutes were seen.

In fact Edward had been taken as a POW. He was at Stalag Luft 3 Sagan-Silesia Bavaria. He was then moved to Nuremberg-Langwasser. When the war was over Edward returned to Seething and he and Betty were married on the 20th May 1945 after obtaining a special license. Luckily Betty still had her wedding dress which she had borrowed from a friend.

Edward went back to the States in 1945 and Mary followed on the 21st March 1946, sailing on the ship "John Ericsson". Edward stayed in the Air Force and was promoted to Major on the 17th January 1946.

Betty and Edward had four sons Edward, Charles, Michael and David.

In April 1948 Betty, Edward and their son Charles, who was 3 months old, travelled to England as Betty's mother was ill. They flew back to Massachusetts on the 3rd June 1948.

In 1949 Edward completed his degree requirements at Harvard and then served at Bolling Air Force base in Washington D.C and at the Air Command Staff College at Maxwell Air Force base in Alabama.



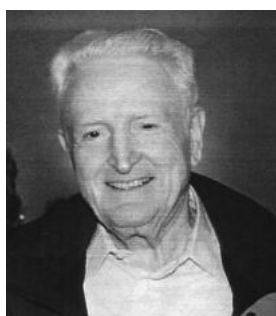
ENGLAND-BOUND—Mrs. Edward M. Wall, Lexington, and 3½-month-old son, Charles, at Logan Airport before going to Suffolk, England, where Mrs. Wall's mother is ill.



In 1954 Edward was a Colonel and commanded a KC-97 Air Refueling Squadron at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. He was then assigned as deputy commander of the 3906th Combat Support Group at RAF Station Greenham Common in England.

He returned back to the states and served at George Washington University as a professor of science in the AFROTC program. In September 1963, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Wall took over as the new procurement officer for the 814th Combat Support Group in Westover Air Force base.

Edward stayed in the Air Force until he retired in 1966. He joined the faculty of the University of Hartford as Associate Dean of the Business School and Professor of Business Law.



Edward passed away on the 20th August 2000 in Simsbury, Hartford, Connecticut. In June 2009, Betty and her son Michael travelled over to England to pay a visit to the bases Edward served at. Betty passed away on the 17th February 2022.

