

# The I.D Bracelet that made it Home

It's October 2021 and a post goes out on facebook for help to identify the owner of a World War 2 identity bracelet that was found by a farmer in the village of Eye, Suffolk; home of the 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

On the front of the bracelet was inscribed "Richard M Francis 11131231". On the back was inscribed "Love Marion".



We, at "Stories of the 448<sup>th</sup>" thought we would try and help them and were successful in finding Richard and the unknown Marion.....

So who were Richard and Marion? And what happened to them?



Richard Marvin Francis was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 1924 in Woburn, Massachusetts to Joseph Norman (b.1890) Francis and Nellie May Estabrook (b.1891) Francis. Richard had a brother Russell Parker (b.1911) and a sister Eleanor May (b.1914). Marion Ruth Chandler was born the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1926 in Boston, Massachusetts to Clarence Irving Chandler (b.1900) and Mary Ellen Walsh (b.1903) Chandler. She was their only child.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1910 Joseph married Nellie in Woburn. They set up home and had a son Russell in 1911 and a daughter Eleanor in 1914. Ten years later in 1924, Richard was born.

Meanwhile, Clarence married Mary in 1925 and set up home in Malden, Middlesex, Massachusetts. In 1927 they had Marion. Clarence was a chemist for a Gas Company.

In 1930 Richard's family was living in Woburn, Middlesex, Massachusetts. Both Joseph and Russell were working as mechanics for a paper business. Nellie's sister Edith was also living with them and was working as a teacher in a school.

In 1937 Eleanor married Frank Herbert Kean (b.1911). They had two sons, Frank Jr (b.1939) and Jeffrey E. (b.1943)

In 1940 Richard's family was still living in Woburn, Middlesex, Massachusetts. Richard was now in high school. Joseph was now a manager and Russell was working as a clerk. Nellie's sister Edith at the age of 61 was still working a teacher in a school.

At the same time, Marion and her parents were now living in Reading, Middlesex, Massachusetts. Richard's sister, Eleanor had asked Marion to baby-sit her children and that's when Richard first met Marion. They soon became sweethearts and despite the war happening, they continued to stay together.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1942 Richard was drafted. At the time he was working for his father. He then enlisted at Boston Massachusetts on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1942. At some point between now and before Richard was sent to England, Marion must have given him the bracelet. Richard was assigned to the 329<sup>th</sup> Station Complement Squadron for the 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group as an aircraft engine mechanic; first working on the B24s and then B17s as the 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group converted to the B17s in October 1944. [NB - The 490<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was activated in October 1943. After training in the United States, it

was deployed to the European Theatre of Operations and participated in the strategic bombing campaign against Germany from 31 May 1944 to 20 April 1945].

On the 10<sup>th</sup> July 1945, Richard arrived back at Bradley Fields, Windsor Locks, Connecticut, by plane for redeployment. Richard and Marion got in engaged and shortly after this photo was taken of them. They look so young, happy and in love.



In March 1947 Richard and his friend Kenneth V Toye Jr were out flying a plane. Toye was the pilot. They had flown over Richard's family home and his mother had waved to them. They then headed for Marion's home. Marion's father came out to see the aircraft when it suddenly plunged to the earth. The engine had failed and they were forced to do an emergency landing on the Bear Hill Golf Course. However the wing brushed the ground and made the aircraft nose over on the turf. The impact forced the engine back into the cabin and pinned Toye down. Toye was killed and Richard, seriously injured.

Marion's and Richard's wedding was postponed until Richard had recovered. However, Richard and Marion finally married on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1947 in Reading, Massachusetts. Richard and Marion were both working for the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company at the time. Richard as an engineer and Marion as an operator.



In 1950 Richard, Marion and their daughter Deborah (b.1949) were living in Woburn, Massachusetts. Richard was working as a drill press operator. Another daughter, Sandi and a son, Ric soon followed.

Richard's brother, Russell was working as a manager for a motor company and living at home with his parents, Joseph and Nellie. Nellie's sister Edith was still living with them. On the 8<sup>th</sup> April 1950 Russell married Dorothy Gardner Babson in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Richard passed away on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2001 in Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, California. Marion passed away on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011 in Clark, Washington.

That leads us back to the bracelet being found in October 2021. Because of Richard's service number on his bracelet, it was a quite an easy search to find him and Marion. We shared our research and Richard's eldest daughter was contacted.

On Memorial Day in May 2022 Richard's bracelet made its final journey home after nearly 80 years of being in Suffolk, England. A wonderful end to a piece of jewellery that held so much love and hope for all those years.

