

Nancy Crossen Booth visit to Centre

On Saturday 13th July 2024 we had a visit by Nancy Crossen Booth and her husband Tom from Ohio USA. They were booked to cruise from Southampton and had a day free before the cruise. Nancy is the youngest daughter of Lt Colonel Mo Crossen who was deputy group commander of the 367th Fighter Group based at Stoney Cross during WW2 and then Ibsley before crossing the channel.



Col Young, Air Marshall Leigh Mallory, Major Crossen 18th June 1944

Lt Colonel Mo Crossen photo can be seen in our Mee Mees tearoom outside the original MeeMees alongside Colonel Charles Young the Group commander and Air Marshall Leigh Trafford Mallory. Mo was a major at the time. Nancy never knew her father as she was born after Mo left for England and unfortunately Mo was killed in action in October 1944.

They were accompanied by Henry Cole. I asked Henry his connection with Nancy

“My connection with Mo Crossen’s daughters, Stacy and Nancy goes back to about 2010. I was a volunteer ranger with the Forestry Commission, spending many happy hours walking the airfields and looking into and recording their history, in order mainly to inform the public and lead guided walks. It was a project which grew, with a lot of help and advice from Alan Brown, John Levesley, Jim Mitchell from the NPA and many more. My ‘favourite airfield’ was and is Stoney Cross. I guess because at that time not much had been written about it. While I was doing on-line searches to find out more about Mo Crossen as he figured in so many of Alan Brown’s photos, I crossed paths with his daughter Stacy who at that time lived in North Carolina and we joined forces to see what we could find out.

With the help of a German mayor from a small village close to where Mo was killed in Oct 1944, we found out exactly what had happened. The mayor whose details I have filed away (and just found) went over to the village and found an elderly gentleman who as a small boy witnessed the dog fight between Mo and I think a Focke Wolf. Mo’s plane was fatally damaged, and he bailed out, sadly his parachute didn’t open properly, and he died on impact.

Mr Esser was one of a party of villagers who collected Mo, and he received a proper funeral in the local churchyard. Mr Esser remembers a polish farmworker stealing Mo’s boots and being forced to give them back.

When the US Army arrived in May 1945 and found Col Crossen’s grave carefully tended they helped the German villagers who were in a bad way with food and medicine. Mr Esser did say that the ladies used Mo’s parachute for making clothing for a long time.

In 2014 Stacy and Nancy visited Mo's grave in the Ardennes and went to see Herr Esser and had afternoon tea (or equivalent!) which brought the story round full circle. I was invited to go with them but sadly couldn't make it. Below a photo of the two daughters by Mo's grave. Nancy is on the left



Stacy also contacted Colonel Charles Young's daughter. She simply went through the City of Helena phonebook and phoned every Young until she scored! They spoke for hours, and Charles Young's daughter sent Stacy many documents and letters and asked her to pass copies on to me. Below is a photo of Mo and Ann. A good-looking couple!"





Also, a photo of Mo with Stacy as a baby in San Francisco prior to shipping out to England”

Unfortunately, Mo was destined never to see his unborn child Nancy

Photos and text courtesy of Henry Cole, Stacy and Nancy

Below are some photos of the visit to the centre and the memorial.



Nancy in FONFA "MeeMees" tearoom
Next to a photo of her Father in front of the original "MeeMees Snack Bar"



Col Young ,Air Marshall Leigh Mallory ,Major Crossen 18th June 1944



Nancy, Sam Ruddy FONFA and Tom at the Centre.

They were impressed by our CGI of P-38s at Stoney Cross Henry Cole said she spoke about it all the time after the visit especially at Stoney Cross.





Front Nancy with Henry Cole centre with his good lady, rear Sam Ruddy.



Nancy and Tom at the memorial.

“After we left Sopley (The Heritage Centre) we called in at the Memorial and then headed up to North Gorley for lunch at the Royal Oak where they both had a pint of Downton bitter! After a brief stop at Ibsley we headed off to Stoney Cross and drove down the main runway stopping to locate a couple of the runway lights. We looked at the Information Board which I was pleased to see is still in good condition. They were somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer size of the airfield. Our last stop was Ocknell Campsite to look at the dispersals and the aircraft tie down points. The staff there were great and have produced an excellent reference book on Stoney Cross for visitors to have a look at.

We eventually got back to the Forest Park (Their Hotel in Brockenhurst) at 6.30! It was a full day, and they are talking of coming back with Nancy's elder sister Stacy.

They had a perfect day with a few tears now and again when Nancy was realising that she was probably standing where her dad had 80 years ago." Henry Cole.

Below are photos of Mo at Stoney Cross and on the following page a letter written by the group commander Col. Charles M. Young.



Lt Col Morris C Crossen, of Cottage Place N. W. Canton, Ohio, deputy group commander at a Ninth Air Force Fighter Base, somewhere in England. (OFFICIAL IX AIR FORCE PHOTO)

Mo at Stoney Cross note the two aircraft kills.



Major General Quesada, Commanding General of the IX Tactical Air Force, and Lt Col Morris C Crossen, at an advanced IX Air Force Fighter Base somewhere in England. (OFFICIAL IX AIR FORCE PHOTO)

Mo with Major General Quesada Commanding General 9TH Airforce

Letter written by Col. Charles M. Young

Commander of 367th Fighter Group to M. Ann Crossen wife of Lt. Col. Morris Crossen Deputy Commander upon his being shot down on October 20, 1944

"Other than the telegram from the War Department I assume that you have received no word concerning Mo.

I know the whole story of his flight and will try to relate it to you briefly.

The group was bombing railroad installations between Duren and Cologne. Mo was leading one of the squadrons (the 392nd) and had successfully completed his part of the mission and had set-course homeward. Meanwhile, one of the other squadrons had been attacked by German fighters. Mo heard the radio conversation when the Germans attacked and said "Let's go help them" on the radio or words to that affect. He then led the 392nd to the scene of the fight and dove down onto the tail of one enemy fighter. That fighter attempted to leave the scene and Mo, with his flight, followed.

Meanwhile another German fighter attacked and two men in Mo's flight broke away to engage. Mo and his wingman continued to chase the first German fighter who headed eastward. He led Mo over the anti-aircraft defences of south Cologne. There the ground guns opened fire and set Mo's right engine on fire. At once Mo pulled up as though he intended to lose speed and bail out. His wingman was unable to pull up as abruptly as Mo did but at once turned to cover Mo as he floated down.

However, due to the thick haze and smoke in the area he could never locate either Mo or his plane. So, no-one can say what happened after he pulled up. I feel that Mo did everything possible to bail out and that if he was successful, he is now safe. Naturally I feel optimistic for I lived with him long enough to know what a resourceful and intelligent pilot he is. But there will be no way of ever knowing what happened until our troops take the area west of the Rhine and the Germans give us a report."

- Copy of a letter written to Ann Crossen by Charles Young (Stacy transcribed from the originals as she couldn't scan back then)
- Henry Cole July 2024