

65-year-old Englishman's search for his WWII father leads to Morgan County and bevy of new-found relatives

NOTE: Last week, The Courier published a letter from a Canadian, Paul Dodds, who wants to locate his father, whom his mother met while he was serving with the U.S. Army in England during World War II. Mr. Dodds' letter was prompted by a Canadian acquaintance, also a native of England, who was successful in tracing his own G.I. father. He was referring to Terence (Terry) Francis, who is the subject of this story.

World War II caused a great upheaval for all countries involved. Fathers and sons were enlisted from every part of every country. Cannel City was no exception. Stanley Dewey Hurt from Railroad Fork, Cannel City, Ky., age 26, was sent to Italy in 1943, was wounded twice and escaped from a prisoner of war camp. In June 1944, while undergoing medical rehabilitation at a military base near City of Wells, England, he fathered a son with an 18-year-old English girl, Doris Francis.

Englishman Terry Francis' lifelong search for his GI father ended successfully in 2006. Terry's success in finding his father was given a boost after legislation in 1990 allowed children of WWII U.S. military personnel to have access to their fathers' military records at National Personal Records Center in St. Louis, Mo. Much assistance came from help Terry obtained through the Internet and the website GITRACE.ORG — an organization that traces children of WWII soldiers whose families were parted during the war. This led to the discovery that Stanley Hurt's home town was Cannel City, Ky. Terry made his first visit there in 2005.

Enter: Tammy, Cletus and Lenell McCarty of Cannel City. Terry's first visit when he arrived in Cannel City was at the post office with Tammy McCarty of the U.S. Postal Service, whom he hoped might have information on the Hurt family. It was at this point that Terry's search took wings. Tammy promptly called her mother, then directed him to her house where she said, "Mama's waitin' for you..."

When they met, Terry said, "Tammy's mother, Lenell, had just called her husband, Cletus, about me." And when Terry introduced himself to them, there



Englishman Terry Francis spent many years searching for his father, a decorated World War II veteran from Cannel City, Stanley Hurt. Terry, standing at right, met with his father, seated center, and other members of his new-found family during a visit to the U.S. in 2006. Others in photo are Terry's brother, Shannon Hurt, standing left; a niece, Robin Hurt, seated left, and Maxine Hurt Taulbee, seated at right. Terry's father and brother, Shannon, are now deceased.

was no doubt in their minds that he was a member of the Hurt family. Cletus McCarty's first comment was, "You favor your grand daddy. You've got his forehead, eyes, and build, and if you look behind you, that's where your daddy's house stood."

Neighbor Brian Finch approached. He listened and added, "I have papers on your grand daddy."

The papers, all hand written in a beautiful script, detailed the sale of "Papaw" Hurt's property to the Finch family. Brian informed Francis that Gloria and Coburn Prater, who lived nearby "are in touch with your father's two sisters, Dana and Vernice (now of Bristol, Va., and Lexington, Ky., respectively).

Brian agreed to call them and ask if they would care to meet with Francis. He called and Gloria agreed.

Gloria called both of Terry's newly-discovered aunts, but received no answer. She said she would keep trying to reach them and would let Terry know when she had spoken to them about

him.

Thanking both Gloria and Coburn — who both told him, "We are going to help you..." — Terry and his GITRACE.ORG friend and his GITRACE helper in his endeavor, Amy Dodd of near Dayton, Ohio, drove back to Ohio, where Terry had to catch his flight back to British Columbia, where he has resided since migrating to Canada at age 23.

Terry still marvels at the remarkable set of coincidences that then followed, which led him to a meeting with his father.

Enroute to Ohio, they made a gas stop in Mt. Sterling, Ky., where Terry decided to look for some Kentucky souvenirs to take back to Canada with him.

Enter: Jane Allen, sales assistant at the Mt. Sterling Cracker Barrel restaurant.

While making great efforts to find souvenirs for Terry to purchase — to the point of opening boxes in the storeroom — Jane asked Terry where he was from and what he thought about Kentucky, and later, wanted to know

why he had made the trip to Kentucky. Learning that he was here to locate the World War II GI father he had never met, she asked his father's name and where in Kentucky he was from.

Terry told her and to the surprise of both, it turned out that Jane Allen's husband, Benny, who happened to be in the restaurant at the time, was also from Cannel City. After being introduced, Benny's first question was, "What's your daddy's name?" And as coincidence would have it, it turned out that Terry's father, Stanley Hurt, and Benny Allen were cousins.

Upon which, Jane immediately suggested to her husband that he take Terry to meet his sister, Cora Faye Allen. "She's the family historian," she explained. Benny generously took the time to lead Terry and Amy to Cora Faye's house which was nearby.

Cora Faye's immediate comment to Terry after they met was, "I thought the ghost of Papaw Hurt walked in here!" Following a pleasant visit during which Terry told her about the circumstances of his birth and about his hard life as a child in England, where he was reared by his mother and grandmother (now deceased), Cora Faye said, "I expect you'd like to see a picture of your daddy..."

"You have a picture?! Wow!" said Terry, and for the first time, at age 59, he saw a picture of his U.S. GI father. Staring at his father's likeness, a color photo, he recalls that he was filled with wonderment and disbelief at the sudden acceleration of information unfolding for him.

From Cora Faye, Terry learned he has a sister named Gayle Patricoff, who is married to an attorney in Dayton, Ohio. The next morning back in Ohio, Terry and Amy began searching the Internet for a lawyer named Patricoff in Dayton. Finding him listed, they discovered they could find him in the Dayton Courthouse and, having just one day left before his flight back to his home in Canada, they drove there immediately.

And there, as coincidence continued to have it, they discovered that his sister, Gayle, also worked in the courthouse. They immediately asked to meet with her and ten minutes later, a door opened and Terry met a smiling Gayle for the first time. A delightful meeting followed with both resolving to continue to get to know each other. Gayle contacted her brother, Shannon, a niece Robin, and finally Terry's father.

Stanley Hurt was then 85



Terry Francis with two other members of his U.S. family, his aunts, Vernice Hurt Nickell, left, of Lexington and Dana Hurt Boggs.



Terry Francis with two new-found family members were part of a series of coincidences that helped him locate his World War II G.I. father. They are Cora Faye Allen, left, and Maudie Prater, right.



Terry Francis and his GITRACE friend, Amy Dodds of Dayton, Ohio, with Courier staffer Carla Jane Collinsworth, seated, during a September visit to Morgan County in search of his father's military discharge records.

years old and suffering with advanced macular degeneration and mild Alzheimer's disease.

Terry and his new-found brother, Shannon became close during the following two years. Sadly, Shannon is now deceased, a victim of squamous cell carcinoma. Terry's father, whom he had met for the first time in 2006, also is now deceased. He died in the fall in Huber Heights, Ohio, where he had spent most of his life after the war as a General Motors employee and union official. Stanley Hurt enlisted in the Army in 1942 at Cincinnati, and saw action as a light tank crewman with the 84th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in North Africa, northern France, and the Rhineland. Wounded twice, he was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Clusters.

Terry and his sister, Gayle, and her husband, George, continue to have affectionate contact. The same is true of Shannon's wife, Linda; Terry's two nieces, Wendy and Robin; aunts Dana and Vernice; uncle Warren; cousins, Cora Faye Allen and Maudie

Prater, Jean, Cindy, and Cathy, "all of whom have been a loving family," Terry says.

Terry's final hope in this long journey to find his father and his own identity is to be granted the honor of having his U.S. citizenship recognized. Toward this end, he has secured official documentation of his lineage and support from his new-found relatives and friends in Kentucky and Ohio. U.S. citizenship and immigration regulations allow provisions for children born to American soldiers abroad during World War II. However, this procedure is by no means easy. Others belonging to GITRACE.ORG, similar organizations such as Warbabe UK and TRACE UK, have succeeded in gaining U.S. citizenship, but nearly always after a long battle with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services. To achieve his goal to become a U.S. citizen, Terry must now obtain the support of a member of Congress. He said during a visit to West Liberty in September of this year that he wants to be close to his family. Now 65 years old, he wants to be allowed "home."

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Eye exams can detect diabetes

FRANKFORT, Ky.--In honor of National Diabetes Awareness Month, the Kentucky Optometric Association (KOA) urges Kentuckians living with diabetes and diabetic eye disease to schedule dilated, comprehensive eye exams on a yearly basis.

Not only do eye exams help monitor diabetes, they can actually help detect it, and early detection can help prevent complications, such as kidney and heart disease. This is especially important in Kentucky, which ranks in the top 10 nationally for percentage of population with diabetes.

"During a dilated exam, an optometrist will look at your retina for early signs of diabetic eye disease, such as leaking blood vessels, swelling deposits on the retina," said Randy Steele, a doctor of optometry who practices in Morehead and West Liberty, and past president of the

KOA. Steele also is diabetic. "Optometrists often serve as the first line of detection for diabetes, since the eye is the only place on the body that blood vessels can be seen without having to look through the skin."

According to recent studies, diabetes is responsible for 8 percent of legal blindness, making it the leading cause of new cases of blindness in adults 20-74 years of age. Each year, between 12,000 and 24,000 people lose their sight because of diabetes. The key to successful eye care is to monitor the disease, including vision, which is why the KOA recommends those with diabetes have a dilated eye examination annually.

Results from the American Optometric Association's new American Eye-Q® consumer survey showed that only 36 percent of people realize that dia-

betes can be detected during a comprehensive eye exam. In addition, 47 percent didn't know that a person with diabetes who does not wear corrective lenses should still receive an annual eye exam.

Changes in vision may not be noticed, so early detection is critical in maintaining healthy vision.

"By the year 2020, the number of people suffering from diabetic eye disease is expected to nearly double," Steele said. "However, monitoring and maintaining control of diabetes through regular visits to the doctor along with adherence to the doctor's instructions can lower one's risk of developing diabetic eye disease by as much as 76 percent."

To find an optometrist in your area, please visit www.kyeyes.org.