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## Current Events

### World War II Incident Sparks Friendship Between Warren, OH and Fentange, Luxembourg

June 26, 2014

Mayor Doug Franklin recently hosted Christian Pettinger of Fentange, Luxembourg. Mr. Pettinger co-authored the book *The Tank Accident in Hesperange, December 26, 1944*, which details an incident that claimed the lives of three American soldiers and traces the journeys of the tank crew from their homes in the United States to the scene of the accident. The authors' research on Corporal James G. Russ led them to the Russ family of Warren, Ohio.

Last year, the town of Fentange, Luxembourg hosted the Russ family for the inauguration of a monument commemorating the servicemen. Below is a statement from the Russ family about the extraordinary cross-continental friendship sparked by historical research, followed by pictures from Mr. Pettinger's visit to Warren and the Russ family's visit to Fentange.

*In 2005 two men, Christian Pettinger and Roland Schumacher, were researching a tank accident that happened on a bridge in their community on Dec. 26, 1944. Three American soldiers died in the accident. They wanted to find out all they could about the soldiers and the accident in hopes of erecting a monument and writing a book so that these American soldiers would not be forgotten. They found out that one of the men was buried in North Carolina and their request for information landed on the desk of a librarian who recognized the last name. She called the sister of James G. Russ, who lived in Creston, NC, and found out that the James G. Russ they were inquiring about had a son in Ohio. Her name was Sandra Lassen and she called us approximately Nov. 2005. She asked if these two men could e-mail us and after we agreed it started a lifelong friendship for all involved.*

*They spent countless hours of research to get all of the details of the tank, the accident and the American soldiers documented. Christian asked me to go through letters I had that James had sent home before the accident, to see if there were any names or information documenting further details. Ironically, we had a piece of foreign paper money that had signatures and addresses on it and was signed, "To You from The Crew" Love James. The names of all five American soldiers who were in the tank were on the piece of money and Christian was ecstatic. The names were Isidore M. Vasko, William Keeler, Oscar L. Davis and Charles D. Cary. Charles D. Cary was injured on November 22, 1944, and replaced by Lewis W. Meade. On December 26, 1944, some tanks were leaving the Battle of the Bulge and going back to France, while others were on their way to the Battle. When "The Crew's" tank passed another on the Alzette Bridge, it got over a little too far and broke through the bridge, and their tank landed upside down in the river. William Keeler, the Tank Commander, and also Oscar Davis, the Driver, were able to free themselves from the tank. Corporal Lewis W. Meade, Corporal James G. Russ and Tec 4 Isidore M. Vasko died in the tank.*

*Christian Pettinger and Roland Schumacher were successful in getting a Monument erected which was installed May 30, 2013, and they held an inauguration for the monument on October 19, 2013. They were also successful in writing a book titled "THE TANK ACCIDENT in Hesperange, December 26, 1944". Also, on the new Alzette Bridge, the Town Council had a serigraphy and text by Paul Keller, an eye witness, affixed to the bridge railings. The text is in dual languages.*

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## Upcoming Events

[Safe Sitter Training](#)

Thursday, Jun. 26th @ 9:30 am - 4:00 pm

[Kent Summer Stock: "Jack and the Magic Beans"](#)

Thursday, Jun. 26th @ 10:30 am

[Ohio Chautauqua Workshop: "The California Trail"](#)

Thursday, Jun. 26th @ 2:00 pm

[Free Children's Immunization Clinic](#)

Thursday, Jun. 26th @ 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

[Free Credit Workshop](#)

Thursday, Jun. 26th @ 6:00 pm



*The admiration that not only these men, but all of the citizens of Luxembourg, have for the American soldiers who came to their rescue during World War II is beyond words. Throughout their Country, wherever the flag of Luxembourg flies, the American Flag is with it. The respect and dignity that our American soldiers deserve is evident throughout the entire Country of Luxembourg. It is men such as Christian Pettinger and Roland Schumacher who will pass on the history that took place during a horrendous era to younger generations, so that they do not forget that the Americans were there for them and saved their Country so they could live in peace.*



Mayor Franklin presents Christian Pettinger with a resolution



Photo of the tank accident taken in 1944



Monument commemorating the American soldiers in Fentange, Luxembourg



Plaque in Fentange, Luxembourg, bearing the names of the American soldiers claimed by the accident

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