

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

Center of Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

An Interview with

Mrs. Marie Speer

Founded

"Gold Star Wives"

April 5, 1945

First President

April 5, 2005

Mr. Misenhimer

My name is Richard Misenhimer and today is April 5, 2005. I am interviewing Mrs. Marie Speer at her home at 9350 South Padre Island Drive #89, Corpus Christi, TX 78418. Her phone number is (361) 937-3043. This interview is in support of the National Museum of the Pacific War, Center for Pacific War Studies, for the preservation of historical information related to World War II. Marie, I want to thank you for taking time to do this interview today.

Mrs. Speer

Well, thank you. I'm very glad to do it and particularly on this day since it's the 60th anniversary of our first meeting in New York City.

Mr. Misenhimer

The forming of the Gold Star Wives.

Mrs. Speer

The Gold Star Wives, yes, sixty years ago in New York.

Mr. Misenhimer

We'll cover that a little later on, too. What is your birth date?

Mrs. Speer

My birth date. Now you're going back in history (laughing). May 9, 1921.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where were you born?

Mrs. Speer

In a fascinating little town outside of New York City called Tappan, New York.

Mr. Misenhimer

And how is that spelled?

Mrs. Speer

T-a-p-p-a-n. And since you've never heard of it, obviously, I'm going to give you some material about that town because it's a historical town now. It's a historical district.

George Washington had his headquarters there, and when they captured Major Andre (you know the story about he was giving the plans away for West Point and Benedict Arnold was captured). They took Major Andre to Tappan where Washington had his headquarters and he was kept prisoner in the little tavern there. And later buried there, until much later on, he was taken back. So it's a historical place, which is fascinating, and I'll give you a little flier on it when you go because if you're interested in history, you're going to be interested in that.

Mr. Misenhimer

Well, we call it Tappan, like Tappan stove, Tappan range.

Mrs. Speer

Well, they called it Tappan.

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, that's what kind of threw me off.

Mrs. Speer

T-a-p-p-a-n.

Mr. Misenhimer

Where did you go to high school?

Mrs. Speer

In Closter, New Jersey because (this is rather strange), Tappan is in New York but it's right on the boundary line, and part of our property was in New York State and part was in New Jersey. And since the house was in New Jersey, I had to go all the way down to the little town in New Jersey to school and go to Closter High School and it was farther away than the New York state school, but it's where your house was.

Mr. Misenhimer

What year did you finish high school?

Mrs. Speer

I guess it was 1938.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you do when you finished high school?

Mrs. Speer

Went to work in New York City.

Mr. Misenhimer

Doing what?

Mrs. Speer

Well, oh my goodness. What didn't I do? I worked first for a bank down on Wall Street, then I worked for Chatham Blanket Company, and then I started to go to New York University at night. And I was studying marketing and advertising. And then I worked in a couple of other places there. And let me see, my last job was there after the war started, advertising agencies weren't doing too well because there was nothing to advertise. All the production was taken up for the war production, so I went to work then for the National Electrical Manufacturers Association called NEMA. And I was

working on a project for the amount of steel that was needed for the electrical industry so they could get their allocation from the War Production Board. So that was my job and when I got married, I was still working on that particular job.

Mr. Misenhimer

Let me back up. Your first job in New York, what kind of pay did you get then, do you recall?

Mrs. Speer

Oh, my goodness. My first job in the bank?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mrs. Speer

\$15 a week, and I had to pay all my car fare out of that and I had this long trip down from Tappan. We went down on the west side of the Hudson in a train. We had to get a ferry across to 42nd Street, then get a street car, cross 42nd Street, and then get on the subway. So all that traveling to get there to go down to make \$15 a week. But we enjoyed it. It was fun. New York was big-time and we enjoyed ourselves. I can't say that we were worried about it too much.

Mr. Misenhimer

You were living at home.

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, living at home.

Mr. Misenhimer

How long did that commute take in the morning or evening?

About an hour-and-a-half.

Mr. Misenhimer

Hour-and-a-half each time.

Mrs. Speer

Yea, each way. And after you're going to college at night, and get out so you catch the last train, the conductors on the train knew where we got off, so if we fell asleep, they'd wake us up and push us out the train (laughing) so we'd get home.

Mr. Misenhimer

So long commutes are not something new, then.

Mrs. Speer

Right, no. Back in those days it was a long commute. We didn't drive, so we didn't drive down to Manhattan naturally. Nobody drives in Manhattan.

Mr. Misenhimer

On December 7th, '41, as you well recall, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. You remember where you were?

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, I certainly do. When I was in New York University, of course I went to night school and we had a big group of people that were going there and I was a member of the Newman Club, which is a Catholic club in non-sectarian universities. And they were having a communion breakfast and all my friends were at the communion breakfast, and I was home with a head cold feeling miserable and I couldn't go there. And in the middle of it, we heard on the radio that this had happened. My brother went down to the communion breakfast and by the time he came home he was already telling us how

many people right there at the communion breakfast said, "We'll go down tomorrow and we'll enlist." The next day, they were down enlisting and my brother did, too. But not my husband because he was working. At that point, he was working for the federal government on lend-lease shipments to England and Russia so that was a job that he had to keep up with because it was an important job. But then later on it didn't matter what your job was, you went and you were drafted. And finally he was drafted and had to go. But in the meantime, we were married. We weren't married at that time.

Mr. Misenhimer

Had you met him then? Did you know him?

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, yes, he was one of this group in the Newman Club, and he also had started the first Catholic Fraternity at New York University. So these were fraternity brothers and we kept up with them for a long time and wrote newsletters to each other telling them what this guy was doing and what the other fellow was doing. Of course, there were several deaths and tragedies, but we kept up with everybody and we did that for a long time.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you knew him in high school or before?

Mrs. Speer

No, no, he was a New Yorker through-and-through, lived on West 20th Street, New York City, in the Chelsea District. No, I met him at New York University. I met him there.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you meet him, what year, before the war?

Mrs. Speer

Yea, '39 or '40, possible late '39 or beginning of '40.

Mr. Misenhimer

So after December 7th, you continued the same work you were doing?

Mrs. Speer

Yes, yes, because it was something that they needed, steel for the electrical industry.

That was important. They didn't want to stop that program. That program had to go on, so I worked there and then we were married in May of 1942.

Mr. Misenhimer

Before or after your birthday? May the 9th is your birthday.

Mrs. Speer

We were married on May 30th. We wanted a long weekend (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer

So you just turned 20.

Mrs. Speer

Yea, probably 21, right. Just turned 21 because I remember my first vote was in New York City.

Mr. Misenhimer

Then you and he lived in New York City?

Mrs. Speer

Yes, this brown stone house I showed you a picture of, my mother-in-law had that house in the Chelsea District of New York, his mother. She was a widow and she had this house and it was a house where all the people coming from Ireland used to come

there first. In fact, their families back in Ireland told them to go to Aunt Mary's because she'll keep you out of trouble, so we had this parade of people coming over from Ireland and there were four stories in this old brown stone house. Then my husband's sister got married and we took one story of the house and made it into an apartment for her. Then when it was time for my husband and me to get married, we took another story of that house and turned it into an apartment, so it was very nice. We both had nice apartments. There was still extra room for the people coming from Ireland up on the 4th floor, so we still had our whole life, and it was there that I started the organization, in that old brown stone house.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now what was your husband's full name?

Mrs. Speer

Edward, and he used the middle name of Howley, that's a family name, Howley, Jordan.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned from Ireland. Was his mother from Ireland?

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, his mother was from Ireland.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was her maiden name, do you know?

Mrs. Speer

Howley.

Mr. Misenhimer

Oh, her maiden name was Howley.

Mrs. Speer

Yes, that's why the family name got in there.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's an Irish name, I gather.

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, were they ever Irish, all big families, tremendous families, and my family was a small family.

Mr. Misenhimer

Your maiden name was what?

Mrs. Speer

Rau, a German name.

Mr. Misenhimer

Just like Misenhimer

Mrs. Speer

Yea, right, but much smaller name. A lot of people can't even pronounce it, but if you're German you know the "au" is pronounced "ow," Rau. The president of Germany was named Rau. Now maybe he's still in office, I'm not really sure but I think so.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened to you along about that time?

Mrs. Speer

Well, he went in the service, so our child was born on November 14, 1943. And my husband was drafted, and he went in the service in January of 1944 when our baby was a month old. And he went in the service in January and he went through basic training

in Fort McGraw in Alabama and did all that and got over to Europe and got over to France. He was in France by late August or the beginning of September and he was put in as a replacement for the 29th Infantry Division that lost so many people going into D-Day. They were on Omaha Beach, the 29th Infantry, and he got on as a replacement for that. From the time they went in service, it was eight or nine months, and he was walking through France already with the 29th Division, so then he went through Holland with them and all the way into Germany. And he was on a mortar and he went back to get some ammunition and it was when he was going back to get the ammunition that he was killed, but the rest of the little crew on the mortar came back. So it was just one of those things. He was just at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Mr. Misenhimer

He was killed how?

Mr. Speer

Well, he was killed outright.

Mr. Misenhimer

I mean by a sniper, or . . . ?

Mrs. Speer

I don't know whether it was a sniper or a mortar shell, I never found out, never heard. There was so much going on there, I guess there were people killed all over the place. And there was this rather strange thing because I received a letter from him written on the day he was killed, November 25th, a V-mail. And one of the college professors receives a V-mail dated November 25th. His mother received a V-mail dated November 25th. So I immediately got in touch with the war department. I said, "Here I got a notice

that he was killed on November 25th. I said, "How can that be? He wrote three letters on the day he was killed?" So I got a very nice reply back saying, "In view of the tactical situation at that particular time, that could very well be he just had a few minutes to sit down and went right back in." So it was rather unusual getting these three letters on the day he was killed. And on one of the letters he said, "Here right now writing this letter in a building that's had quite a few bombs on it, the two upper stories have already been bombed off and I'm on the bottom story, and if they get down to the bottom story, I'll get a shell in my lap." So that could have been what happened, although I heard he was not sitting there anymore. I know he was involved, they were running out of ammunition and he went back to get the ammunition so it happened a few hours later I guess.

Mr. Misenhimer

How often did you hear from him, how often was he able to write?

Mrs. Speer

He wrote just as much as he could, and he wrote quite often.

Mr. Misenhimer

You think once a week or more often?

Mrs. Speer

Oh, I think even more often. I've got a lot of old letters from him, a lot of them. Some are getting yellow with age, naturally, but the V-mail stood up a little bit better. I still have V-mails and I have letters he wrote. He was quite a prolific writer. He liked to write anyway because before he was in the service he used to write me love poems and I still have them. I still have the love poems and I've got a lot of the letters that he wrote me, and his letters are like a history book right there. Everyone that was killed or went

through the war, their whole lives were histories. I mean, you can never recapture all the things that went on back there because everybody was involved.

As we said, there were three fronts, there was the European front, there was the Pacific front, and there was the home front. So everyone, even on the home front, was involved. They had their victory gardens or they were working in some defense industry or something, so the whole country was involved and all of them had their flags hanging in the window. And patriotism was strong. They'd do a lot for their country. It wasn't like what we have now, what we've had since. My husband's cousin managed to do a little bit better getting in the military because he had gone through a military high school. I think it was Saint John's in New York City, and they had a little military training. Well, he went in and he got to be a 2nd Lieutenant and I remember after we got news that my husband was killed, I got a letter from him saying, "Those krauts, I'm gonna get them." A couple of months later, we heard that he was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. And his brother ended up in a prison camp and he came back just about blind. He got over it later on, but from malnutrition. And my brother went over with the invasion of Africa, but he managed to get a soft job. He ended up being a tech sergeant and did office work for a general, General Wilson I believe his name was, and he went with the group through France, Italy and up through Paris, and General Wilson went into Germany with the group further in. My brother was left in Paris to finish up some paperwork and bring it with him. He got in a truck and the truck ran off the road and my brother was pinned on the passenger side and he ended up, he didn't remember a thing, he ended up in Paris in a hospital and then came back to Fort Dix, New Jersey, where he was for a couple of years. While he didn't die as the direct cause, he died in his early 50's and

they said it was probably some internal injury they didn't even realize that he had as a result of the war because outside of that, he was in good health. But our family was pretty well broken up with the war.

Mr. Misenhimer

A lot of effect of the war had come in later in things like that. When the war was over in '45, that wasn't the end of it.

Mrs. Speer

Right.

Mr. Misenhimer

What rank did your husband have when he was killed?

Mrs. Speer

Oh my goodness, a buck private. I don't think he even got his PFC stripe. He went in as a draftee, got his basic training, and got into the 29th Division before he even knew what was happening to him. And being from New York City, never carried a gun in his life, and never hiked very much. I mean, maybe he strolled down the street to the store or went up to Central Park for an adventure and walked for a half hour, but he was not an athletic type at all. But before he went over there, he said, "I feel that I am pretty well trained." He said, "They tell me what to do and I'm gonna do it." And he says, "It's everybody's duty to go, and I'm gonna go and I'm going to do the best I can." So he took it philosophically.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did you get notice of his death?

Mrs. Speer

Telegram. There were no casualties' assistance officers back then. Nobody came and gave you a whole lot of money or talked to you or anything else. You just got a telegram and that was it.

Mr. Misenhimer

Was your mother or anyone around you when you got the telegram, or were you by yourself?

Mrs. Speer

My sister-in-law and brother-in-law, the ones that had the apartment on the second floor, they accepted the telegram, and they came up to my apartment and told me. And they didn't want to tell his mother, so they told her for a while that he was missing and I don't know if that was better or worse because then her mind was up in the air not knowing what to do.

Mr. Misenhimer

So what happened next?

Mrs. Speer

Next, being a big extended Irish family, it seemed that everybody got married, had eight or 10 kids. It was this huge Irish family. From there on it, it was a parade of people coming to visit and some of them were having special masses for him, so it seemed to never end. There was a special mass or a big event coming all the time, so we were kept busy with that. Everybody wanted to express their sympathy. And all this group of people coming around, they were very, very warm-hearted and very good and very nice and very sweet. So that's what happened then and then, let me see, that was in November of '44 and then I knew one woman from NYU whose husband had been

killed and I called her up and I called a couple of other names that I found in the paper and invited them to come over to my apartment. I wasn't sure exactly what we were going to do, but I did jot down some purposes for the organization. And pretty much so, those same purposes that I jotted down are still the purposes of the organization. I can give them to you in a little flier we've got. I'll give them to you later.

Mr. Misenhimer

So you did that right after he was killed.

Mrs. Speer

No, April 5th, so that was a few months later. All this time between the time he was killed and the time that I got the group together, it was his parade of different people coming to express their sympathy and bringing presents to the baby. My son, as you can tell from this, was just a year and two months old, so there were people coming to see the baby and there were people having special masses. It was just one thing after the other, but then it quieted down a little and that's when I got in touch with some of these other widows. They came to my apartment in that old brown stone house I was talking about, and that's when we started it, yea. So we decided we'd send out little . . .

Mr. Misenhimer

Did you call it the Gold Star Wives then?

Mrs. Speer

No, we called it the Widows of World War II. And later on, a few months later, we said, "Oh, we think it would be nice if we'd be called "Gold Star Wives." We were wives when our husbands were killed, so we're going to be "Gold Star Wives." And then we called it "Gold Star Wives of World War II." We thought that that was the war to end all wars.

That's what people thought back then. So it wasn't until several years later that we called it "Gold Star Wives of America," and we didn't even realize at that point that there was going to be a Korean war. But we changed the name then to include the widows of Peace Time Services because if you get killed in peace time, you're as dead as if you got killed by a bullet in the war. We had heard about some women whose husbands were in the Service who were killed in accidents, and we thought, "Well, we don't want to exclude them. They should be part of it, too. They've got the same problems, same little children." And remember the little children who grew up a little later. And we were worried about summer camp programs. At that point most of them were just little tots. So we all had the same problems—babysitters when we wanted to work—we'd have to find somebody to take care of them. I was pretty young but I had my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law, and my mother and father still up in Tappan. And my mother loved to cook. So I could always go there for a good meal, even though we didn't have much money (we didn't have cash). We were still a lot dependent upon our families and we were still young, I was just like a little girl who had just left home. And they just absolutely, so loved that baby. "Don't you want to go someplace so we can mind the baby?" I never had any worry about babysitters (laughing).

Mr. Misenhimer

How many brothers and sisters did your husband have?

Mrs. Speer

He only had one sister because his father had died a long time ago, see, so his mother was not the usual pattern of the Irish mother. She only had the two children.

Mr. Misenhimer

You didn't pay rent there, then, or did you?

Mrs. Speer

Well, technically, but then after the . . . I don't think anybody even thought of it. I don't even remember. I must've given her something. And when my husband was home and we were still living there, he gave her something but I let him worry about that. You know, it was his mother so I let him take care of the finances, so I don't really know what he gave her.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned a while ago the government. What did you get from the government when your husband was killed?

Mrs. Speer

I got \$50 a month, they called it a pension back then, and \$15 a month for the first child. Now everybody had insurance policies, \$10,000 insurance policies. Almost everybody had that. It was called NSLI, National Service Life Insurance; you probably remember that. But we had decided a long time before that that when he went in the Service, that he should make out the insurance policy to his mother and to me, half to each. So back in those days, if you were young, you were encouraged to get it for 20 years, so I got (considering I got half my monthly payment from insurance was \$27.55), and if you got the full \$10,000 and if you got it for the 20-year period, it was \$55. So it wasn't too much. And there was no such thing as a lump sum. You just couldn't get it in a lump sum. Now if you were older, you could elect to get it for life, but when you were that age, you had a child, you weren't thinking about 10 or 15 years from now. You were thinking of right now and the grocery bill right now. And even though I had family, you

couldn't depend on family forever; you didn't want to, you had to get on your own, so I had to think about what am I going to do to get on my own? So that's what happened and I moved back to Tappan because my mother and father had a rental house and I lived in the rental house for a while and then I realized I was spending so much time going back and forth to Washington on legislation that I moved down to Washington with the little boy. Later on, my mother and father were so lonesome after having been in that old homestead of Tappan since they were married in the early 1900's, they couldn't stand it anymore. They wanted to be near their grandchild, I think the grandchild more than me (laughing), so they moved near Washington. I lived with them and my father died soon after that, and then my mother lived a few years more.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mrs. Speer

Just the one brother. The German families didn't have as many as the Irish.

Mr. Misenhimer

I only had one brother.

Mrs. Speer

Only one brother, see.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now tell me about when your husband died, you were working with steel, doing the steel deal, right?

Mrs. Speer

Actually it was National Electrical Manufacturers Association.

Mr. Misenhimer

Getting the steel allocations.

Mrs. Speer

Yea, and then I worked there for a while and then I worked for a while also on some research projects for New York University. They were making a study of, oh, when it was best to have public utilities or private financed utilities. So I got better hours working for this NYU project, a little bit more money, so I went over there for a while and worked there. But I wasn't really thinking about working. I remember one time I forgot to cash my salary check and they had to reissue a long time later. I was just so intent on living and food wasn't that expensive back in those days and I really didn't need too much. I didn't need very much.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now the \$50 and the \$15, how long did you get that?

Mrs. Speer

I got that until they had automatic, little raises now and then, maybe \$5, \$10, and I don't remember, but later on, of course, I did remarry in '52, so then, of course, I got nothing. But now since I am a widow again, I get my DIC back again because that's the practice now, they give the DIC back. And a lot of people say, "Oh, you're so lucky." Yes, but that was sort of patterned after some government agencies and so forth. I know a lot of the states have programs like that. If you are under state benefits, you get it back if you become a widow again after you've remarried, so now I receive that money, which is a lot, lot more than I got way back then.

Mr. Misenhimer

But it doesn't go as far.

Mrs. Speer

No, it doesn't go as far.

Mr. Misenhimer

Now you mentioned you went to Washington for legislation. How did this come about?

Mrs. Speer

Well, I was very naïve at first. I and a couple of other women went down there and we thought that if we talked to our own senators or representative, everything would be taken care of.

Mr. Misenhimer

This had to do with the Gold Star Wives.

Mrs. Speer

Yes, we went down there to see if we couldn't get more money for the widows or do something for them. From the very beginning, we had this, well, the fathers, if they came home they would get educational benefits for the children. Our children are going to get nothing, so let's try to get educational benefits for the children and let's try to get educational benefits for the widows so that they can learn a trade and become more productive and get a better life for themselves. So we went down campaigning for all those other things and another thing was social security. We had managed to have the social security law changed so that servicemen when they were in service, got credit for the time that they were in service because it had a very strange way of boomeranging at first because the men received no credit for their service time. Therefore, if they went in the service and lived several years, their benefits that they accumulated before were

erased because you had to have half the period of time that you could have had. So their time was erased, and if you went in the service and got killed early, you had a better chance of getting some social security benefits. I got some little social security, but not very much because I don't think social security, at that point, was given to people when they were working in the government. He got his social security from some job he had before the government, but it wasn't very much. But at least I got a little bit. I don't even remember what it was, but it was so little that I can't even remember. Now it's a lot better so that helped a lot of people because some of these women's husbands had been in the regular Army or something where they got nothing, so that helped that.

And then another thing, we managed to get the loan benefits if they were gonna buy a house or something, they extended that to the widows, the home loan and so forth because most of us didn't have a down payment anyway so we couldn't get it. But later on a lot of good things happened from all this. We just took up one thing at a time. I remember at one point we had a campaign to keep the commissary privileges for everybody and that was accomplished. And then at first, they gave some medical care for the Navy people and not for the Army people. Then gradually we got one after the other. We got a lot of things corrected, so we did quite well but it took a long time, and a lot of people don't realize how long it takes. And you have to work with the committees and we didn't know it, but it was an education. We learned all this. Nobody ever taught us anything of how to lobby in Congress, but we certainly learned fast.

Mr. Misenhimer

When you moved to Washington, did you have a job down there at that point?

Mrs. Speer

No, I just managed to get along on what I had. First I had an apartment and then, of course, eventually my mother and father moved down. They had sold their property in Tappan and they just bought outright the house down there, so I had a place to live. As I said, my family was a big help to me.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you actually form the Gold Star Wives officially? When was that official start date?

Mrs. Speer

Well, April 5, 1945. That's the first time we started. Then we sent out notices for a meeting at a high school in New York, and we sent out a lot of notices of just names that we managed to get. Then we had another meeting, and then we had to start having our meetings at the Governor Clinton Hotel. See, a week after I started the organization on April 5, a week later you know what happened? Franklin Roosevelt died. So it was right after that that we got in touch with Eleanor and then she wrote a couple of articles and then we had her come to some meetings and so forth. And we even went on tour of her house in Hyde Park and we talked about . . . she signed our original charter, so we got our charter together. Of course, we had to get a lawyer to draw up all the forms and everything, go through all that. But all this period of time we were organizing chapters and going out forming chapters, and we didn't have very much income. I remember one time, a whole group of ladies from New Jersey sent out some postcards and they called themselves the Three Musketeers, and they said, "Marie's out there driving around on a bus and she's got no money at all. The Three

Musketeers are gonna send her a few dollars, do whatever we can." So they sent me some money. I got it right through the mail and I never even knew who the Three Musketeers were. And later on I heard that there were three women from the New Jersey chapter who were doing this. But one of our first chapters was all the way out in Minneapolis because we got so much diversity through Eleanor's column and through other means. Then we got a chapter in Chicago and gradually we got these people from all over the country who heard about it and then started chapters in different places. And, of course, we had a lot of New Jersey chapters. They came in easily because they were right there, and we got some others in New York state and then in New England we got quite a few, Boston, Holyoke, and all around there. So let me see, now I'm down, in my story, I'm down in Washington, right?

Mr. Misenhimer

You're doing the lobbying down there and things.

Mrs. Speer

Yes, and that kept on for some time. Then, of course, in between, I took the trip over to Europe that I told you about, but I don't know that we put that on tape, did we?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, tell me about it.

Mrs. Speer

Well, one day, I was still living up in New York at that point, I got a phone call from the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, and they said that they were having a woman come over from Holland. She was the wife of a mayor of Maastricht, which is the biggest city in the southeast of Holland, and they said that they would like (they knew my husband was

killed and was over there in Margraten), me to come over there and visit the Margraten Cemetery and then I could go anyplace I wanted to on the KLM Airlines after I got there. So I went over to Europe and then when I got to Maastricht, the American Graves Registration Command heard about my trip and they contacted me and they said to come down to Paris, so some of the Dutch people around Maastricht drove me down to Paris and down in Paris the American Graves Registration Command took over my trip, more or less, and set me up in a hotel and I ate in the mess with the military and everything and they drove me around. They said, "Well, did you have a good time seeing Paris?" I said, "Yep, I saw Paris with three chaplains in a jeep (laughing). I saw all the churches. I didn't go to Pig Alley, but I did see the churches." So when I came back, they had asked me in Paris, the Graves Registration Command, to report to the people in Washington from Graves Registration. That's when they set up a series of meetings so I could go with some people from the Graves Registration Command and talk to the dependents of people who had loved ones buried overseas, about the program, whether they wanted the people to bring them back to the States or not. I eventually had my husband brought back to the States and he is buried in Arlington where I am going to be buried. I already have all that arranged; that's where I'm gonna be.

Mr. Misenhimer

When did you make this trip over there?

Mrs. Speer

Let me see. Was it '46? Yea.

Mr. Misenhimer

1946?

Mrs. Speer

1946, and it was in the spring but I don't remember the exact days.

Mr. Misenhimer

How did KLM get in touch with you?

Mrs. Speer

They had read something about the Gold Star Wives.

Mr. Misenhimer

I see, and you were the president at that time.

Mrs. Speer

Yes, and I was the president at that point, and then when they heard that my husband was buried in Margraten, that clinched it because you've got a definite connection.

Mr. Misenhimer

Have you been to Europe several times since or at all?

Mrs. Speer

No, at that point, I had never even been up in an airplane before. That was my first time up in an airplane for starting up and going overseas.

Mr. Misenhimer

And that was back in the prop plane days, too.

Mrs. Speer

Oh yes, right. We went through Greenland. Was it Greenland?

Mr. Misenhimer

Probably, yes.

Mrs. Speer

Probably, yea. I had a big layover. This article in the "Hearst Publication" is dated August 18, 1946. So that shows me coming back, so I must've gotten back in early August of 1946. See, Eddie's the little guy there.

Mr. Misenhimer

That's your son there.

Mrs. Speer

Uh huh, running up to greet me.

Mr. Misenhimer

What are some other things that happened?

Mrs. Speer

We had our first meetings and everything, we're in New York City, and then by 1947, we had a group down in Washington, DC, and we had groups in different parts of the country. So we had a convention, our first big meeting other than in New York City, and it was in Washington, DC at the Roosevelt Hotel. We had invited a number of people from Congress, etc., so that's when we did that. Then a year later we had another good thing happen to us. There was an organization back then called the American War Dads. Have you ever heard of them?

Mr. Misenhimer

No, I haven't.

Mrs. Speer

They were mostly from the Midwest, Kansas City, St. Louis, around that area, and they heard about us. I don't know how—in Washington because they did have some people

coming to Washington every once in a while. Oh yes, I even have some pictures of them in Washington with me. And they were very, very nice. They first started out by doing parties for the kids and giving them presents and things, doing some nice things. They said, "Well, nobody can go out and tell the story of the organization, what you want to do, better than you." They said, "Would you be interested in going around visiting our chapters, and we'll pay all your expenses, and then you can start up chapters as you're going around or you can talk to the widows as long as you visit our chapters once in a while so they can find out what you're doing." They were absolutely wonderful. They said, "Now when we say we're gonna pay for your expenses, we mean everything. If you have to have some clothes cleaned, go ahead." And they said, "If you run short of money, you're driving through Kansas City anyway, stop at our office, we'll give you some money." So that was quite a boost.

Mr. Misenhimer

What organization was that?

Mrs. Speer

The fathers of people who had someone in the service.

Mr. Misenhimer

So this was fathers of servicemen.

Mrs. Speer

Fathers of servicemen, and as time went on, they did have some Gold Star Fathers in there, too—some men whose sons had been killed. The executive director of the organization was Roe Bartle, and he later became mayor of Kansas City. So I had a new car at that point. I don't know, I guess God takes care of naïve young women

(laughing). But my mother's brother had died and he had a widow that lived on for some time, and all of a sudden I got word that she had died. My uncle had left in his will that my brother and I were supposed to get a certain amount of money, you see, in the event that his widow hadn't spent it all, which she didn't. So I got enough money, and my mother said, "You'd better go out and get yourself a car right now. You're gonna need that for everything." Because I had been driving my father's car because he died, so I kept on driving that car. She says, "That car is pretty old there. You'd better get yourself a new car." So I had a new car at that point.

Mr. Misenhimer

What did you get, what kind?

Mrs. Speer

A Plymouth. We always drove Plymouths back in those days. I think I bought a new Plymouth for a little over a thousand dollars back in those days. It was such a difference from now. So anyway, I had the new car and I took a friend with me and we drove all over the United States visiting new chapters and visiting the American War Dads and everything. They were absolutely wonderful. They were all businessmen. They had money, yes, they had money, and they wanted to do something. The war was over, they had money in the treasury, they had money in their pockets. What better can we do with it than send this woman and her friend and her little boy (naturally he went along with me). He was the doll. Everybody, they just loved him. He was a very, very cute little boy anyway, if I do say so myself. He had light blond hair and very light blue eyes and a face like a little cherub (laughing). Some people used to say, "He should've been a girl instead of a boy because he's got that cherub look on his face."

So we went all over the country—out west, Wyoming, California, all these different places where we went to new chapters that were starting up and all the places visiting the War Dads. They would have meetings all arranged when we went there. They were just wonderful people. It was so nice. Of course, finally all the men are dead now. It's such a long time ago and it's now another generation. They were the fathers, so it's just like now. They were looking for some Gold Star Mothers to go to the dedication, the World War II dedication. There weren't any Gold Star Mothers left. That's another thing. Did you call me Gold Star Mother when you called?

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes.

Mrs. Speer

Yes!

Mr. Misenhimer

Yea, it's just natural to say that (laughing).

Mrs. Speer

I know (laughing), people just automatically say that and we have to stop them all the time and remind them what Gold Star Mother is. There are Gold Star Mothers now, but they are from a different war. They're from the current war. Okay, so that helped develop the organization and bring it back and all the time, of course, we're keeping in touch with what's going on in Washington. And then we started having national conventions in different locations to get the women involved because at that point, we had chapters all over the country, so I think our next big convention after Washington

was in Detroit. Then we had a very nice convention in Rapid City, South Dakota from way, way back then at the . . . what do they call it where they have those statues?

Mr. Misenhimer

Mount Rushmore.

Mrs. Speer

Mount Rushmore, yes, at Mount Rushmore, and that was very nice. So then later on in 1952, I kept these papers going, as you'll see, all the way into '54 and I said, "I just can't do it anymore," because I was remarried and I had two little children. I was married twice since, and I remarried and well, I did something, as much as I could, naturally, with two little children.

Mr. Misenhimer

How many total chapters did you all wind up with?

Mrs. Speer

Oh dear, I came across a list recently of the chapters that we had back then, way back then, in '47, and I think there were about 65. Now I'm not sure, probably about the same number, but some of them are larger. Now we have a regional set-up where the people are not part of a chapter. They're part of a region, and at this point, we have eight regional conventions in a year. So our regional convention this year is in St. Louis. This is a big region. It covers south central, but if you go from Corpus Christi to St. Louis, it's a big trip. We might as well go all the way to a national convention (laughing), but we're going. That's where the motions, cause that's the way it's set up. You go to region first, then you go to national. Our national convention this year is in

Orlando, Florida. And, actually, I think it's just as close to Orlando as it is to St. Louis, but we'll go just the same.

Mr. Misenhimer

What was the peak membership you had?

Mrs. Speer

Oh, well, later on our membership peaked because we got the Korean widows in there, too. I mean, the Korean and Vietnam widows, and then we got a big boost because we got some names from the V.A. They were nice enough to give us some names. We're supposed to get another bunch of names right now so we can have another national mailing. We had a national mailing and then we got some others; I'd say about 15,000. It should be more because there's a lot we're not reaching and the group that we have trouble reaching (I'll tell you the ones that we have trouble reaching) are the ones that remarried when they were young, lost their V.A. pension or whatever they were getting. And, do you know a lot of those women are lost to the system because they don't know they can go back and go to the V.A. and get their compensation reinstated. That is the group that we're . . . I would be in touch with the V.A. about it, too. Well, they know about it and they give us their blessing or try to do what they can, but they've lost touch with them. They don't have numbers anymore, see, and they don't even know what names they're living under. So that's a part that is very sad because some of these older women who lost their husbands, these old ladies are in their 80's and 90's, they should be in nursing homes. They're dying off all the time, that World War II group, you know that.

Mr. Misenhimer

1500 a day is the last I heard.

Mrs. Speer

Yea, and the widows are dying off the same way or maybe a little slower, but they're still dying off, so that's a sad group because we know a lot of them. I just heard recently from a lady up in Boston. She said she had a woman that she found out about and she said she just couldn't believe it. The woman had been living on practically nothing, practically starving to death on a little social security. And all of a sudden she's got this money from the government. "You mean they're gonna give me that money? I'm gonna get that much money?" She was absolutely floored, but she hadn't been getting it and she couldn't have been getting it for the last 20 years or so, or 30; I don't know how long. Her husband was killed long time ago, I mean, not killed, but I mean her second husband died ages and ages ago. And a lot of them ended in divorce. This is a hard thing to take, but I know of a couple of women whose husbands were killed in World War II, and everybody had heard about the fact that these widows got so much money from the big insurance policies. \$10,000 back then sounded like a lot of money.

Mr. Misenhimer

It was, yes.

Mrs. Speer

So they had some young men pursuing them, they remarried, and then the new husbands found out that they didn't get their \$10,000 in one sum. They were getting \$55 a month and they said goodbye and that was the end of it. They just ended up losing their money completely and others married other servicemen who weren't in good

health maybe and who died, so my second husband, we got a divorce. I had two wonderful children and, unfortunately, my son died of cancer a couple of years ago.

Mr. Misenhimer

Sorry to hear about that.

Mrs. Speer

Oh, he was so great. He had been the editor of the newspaper at Texas A&M, which was a good start, and he went out to California. He married a girl who was in journalism at Texas A&M and they ended up in California and he was on the Orange County Register, which is a nice job. But then his wife wanted more children and he went to work for Orange County and had a very, very good job in public relations. And they thought so much of him, they were just wonderful to him, but he got cancer and cancer is uncontrollable.

Mr. Misenhimer

Terrible thing.

Mrs. Speer

But I still have my daughter in Midland, so I am so glad I had those additional two children because they mean so much to me. Even my boy who died has two children, and his widow and I keep in touch all the time, send presents to them, etc. So most of my family is in California now, the biggest bulk of them, except my one daughter in Midland. That's how I get through Fredericksburg all the time as I told you.

Mr. Misenhimer

You mentioned your group set up like summer camps and stuff like that. What are some other things that they did?

Mrs. Speer

Our first summer camp project, we sent a group of children up to a summer camp in the Catskills in New York and there was a mother and father, a Gold Star Mother and a Gold Star Father, who paid for it. It was their camp and they had set it up as a goodwill thing. They had plenty of money and they had this camp. So our first group went up there and I remember my son went up to that one and he had just a wonderful time. When I moved down to Washington, we had some summer camp programs that some churches had. Our organization paid something to the churches to take our group of children and they gave us a good rate. We didn't have to pay too much, and we were able to get quite a few children there. Then the American War Dads I was telling you about, they took some children from the Midwest, from St. Louis and different parts out there, and they were going to this camp out there. So before you know it, this got . . . and we had our major fundraising projects, we sent out a mailing. And we got a little bit more money and then we started our own camp in Spooner, Wisconsin. We had that going for a few years. We named that one after General Walker. You remember General Walker who was killed in Korea?

Mr. Misenhimer

Right, right.

Mrs. Speer

His widow was a member of the organization.

Mr. Misenhimer

Walton Walker, I'm sure, wasn't it?

Mrs. Speer

Yea, I guess so. I've got a picture of that camp program here and they had a picture, his picture in there. St. Louis, going to camp, getting ready to go to camp, go to New York. This was not our own camp yet. Our own camp came just a little later. (Showing Pictures)

Mr. Misenhimer

We are looking through a collection of the publications put out by their group starting in '45. Is that right?

Mrs. Speer

Uh huh.

Mr. Misenhimer

And once a quarter, four times a year.

Mrs. Speer

No, now it's four times a year; back then and for a long time it was every month.

Mr. Misenhimer

Monthly, oh, OK.

Mrs. Speer

That was a lot of work.

Mr. Misenhimer

Yes, that was, right.

Mrs. Speer

Most of the children were with Hopalong Cassidy, William Boyd. He used to give parties. Here he is. He was one of our benefactors. This is President Eisenhower greeting a group of our people at a convention.

Mr. Misenhimer

You've had some important people at your conventions then.

Mrs. Speer

Yes. That's General Walker. That's what you said, Walton Harris Walker, right. And her name was Carolyn, and there President Eisenhower is looking at the picture of Walker that was given to the camp and was put up in the camp. I'm glad I saw this. This is a picture from the camp. That's a nice one. Here, this is it. "A young camper salutes the portrait of General Walton Harris Walker," yea. That was hanging in the camp, see. And then the kids grew up, so the next thing was educational benefits, which at that point, the government was taking care of. Of course, the educational benefits went on for years, but it was so many after World War II. The camp program was a major thing.

Mr. Misenhimer

What were some other things that you all did other than the camp?

Mrs. Speer

Well, mostly activities for the kids, as we could. All sorts of local activities, you know. Any fairs, everything. They actually had their own organization called Gold Star Sons and Daughters. I don't know how we're gonna arrange this, but I think we're going to have a permanent subsidiary of Gold Star Sons and Daughters because now we have another problem. Some of these Gold Star Wives are too old to get out and do anything. Right here in Corpus Christi we have one daughter who brings her mother, another daughter-in-law who brings her mother, and the young people are more active than the old people. The old people can't do anything anymore, and the daughter-in-

law, one of the daughters-in-law, is having a patio sale at her house to raise money for the local group. So they're as active as the mothers, so we said, somehow we've got to get them together whatever we're gonna call them. We'd love to make them actual members of the organization but then what do you do about the name? We haven't figured this out yet. Call them Gold Star Wives or change it and call them Gold Star Families, or call them Gold Star Sons and Daughters and have an affiliate? A long time ago when we called them Gold Star Sons and Daughters, it was taken care of by the Gold Star Wives because they were still kids. But now that these people are adults, what do we do? We want to make it so that it's like the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution, see. So that there will still be, as time goes on, anyone that is killed in the service will have some descendant to act in their behalf or to feel they still want to carry on for those who have died. We are a very patriotic group; we think a lot of patriotism. We're not all republicans but a lot of us are (laughing).

I've got to say something. I remarried and had the two little children, the organization kept going, but I didn't have as much time to work with it anymore. I think the last issue that I got out was '54, yea, 1954, February. And then I got a divorce and then my oldest son went out to the Air Force Academy. He flew away and I said, "Good-bye" like an old bird, you know, the first to leave the nest. I was living in Washington, or some place, and I met Cliff Speer, who was my more recent husband. I had gotten a divorce and I went out to visit my son at the Academy and Cliff came out there and we were married in Colorado Springs. Then he wanted to get more time toward his retirement; he had been an Air Force pilot. In fact, he flew mostly in Korea.

He was there for the beginning of the war to the end and I think he reenlisted while he was out in Korea. He reenlisted or what is it when you're an officer; it's something else?

Mr. Misenhimer

I'm sorry . . .

Mrs. Speer

What do they call it? They don't call it reenlisting when you're an officer. What do they call it?

Mr. Misenhimer

I thought it was reenlisting.

Mrs. Speer

Maybe it is reenlisting. I didn't know it was the same thing. But anyway, he went in for another tour of duty. Maybe that's it, another tour of duty. He was there through the whole Korean thing from beginning to end, and I must've met him sometime after the Korean War, sometime along there. We were married in '62. Then he wanted to get some more credit toward his retirement and we ended up down in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. So that kept me away from the organization for a while. We were down there all five years. When I came back he retired completely and I was reassigned. It was the first time I'd ever worked for the government, and they put me on a reassignment list and I ended up working as a management analyst down there. They put me on a reemployment list and they had an opening up at Little Rock Air Force Base so we ended up there. After I got up there, all I could hear from Cliff Speer, my husband, was, "It's alright, but it's nothing like Corpus Christi, Texas." I went through so much of that (laughing). At that point, my youngest son started to go to A&M and then I had my

daughter one year behind him and she was always a "me, too" one. She always, anything her brother did, she wanted to do, too. So she said, "Well, if he goes to A&M, I'm gonna go to A&M too." So I thought, "Oh God, I'm gonna have two children paying out-of-state tuition fees. Does this make sense? What am I working for? So I gave up my job in Little Rock and we moved back to Corpus Christi. When I got down here I found out that the salaries weren't as good as a government job, being a management analyst. So I worked for a little while and then when my son came out of A&M and graduated, he came down here and my son and I started a newspaper. Then he ended up, his wife-to-be up at A&M, she graduated a year later so the two of them took off for California to make their fortune. And that's how he ended up at the Orange County Register.

But I started this paper so I kept it going. I had two newspapers at that time. I had the Flour Bluff, which this is Flour Bluff here, which covered Flour Bluff and Padre Island; and then I had another newspaper. It used to be called the Island Suns and then it got to be called the Seaside Sun. It was a newspaper that went in all the hotels and motels. I sold the advertising like a group, either two papers or three papers, then after a while I got another paper that was mostly political and that was called the Coastal Bend Sun, so I had the three Suns you see. I sold the group advertising for the three Suns, and I did that for over 25 years. When you run a newspaper, you get started with something you can't stop. You're always thinking about well, I've got this week, what am I gonna put in next week? And you do three papers for over 25 years and you get a little tired (laughing). What really made me stop with the newspapers was that my son, the one who had cancer, was sick out in California, and when you have

newspapers you're so stuck you can't do anything. Somebody came in and wanted to buy the paper so I said OK, I was ready to say, "Take them!" And I've stayed here ever since. I've just gotten used to this area and I like the weather and it's not too far away from Midland. I can go up and see my daughter when I want to and I've got friends here and I'm very involved in politics and all the Republican things that go on. A lady from Fredericksburg gave me her card. She goes to the Republican meetings up in Austin. She's in the real estate business.

Mr. Misenhimer

What medals or ribbons did your husband get?

Mrs. Speer

Purple Heart, that's all.

Mr. Misenhimer

He did get the Purple Heart then.

Mrs. Speer

Oh yea. I've got the Purple Heart, but back in that time there wasn't much time for ribbons or anything. He was right in the middle, they were all in the middle, of everything. And how they could even tell or know what one person got or did that was a little bit better than the other guy, how could they tell? There were people being killed all around them. There was so much devastation, so much. I was just looking up on the internet about the 29th Division and he was in the 175th Regiment of the 29th Division, and they had a lot of casualties. I think in the Rhine area, oh that 175th, I think it was something like over 3,000, almost 4,000, casualties in a short period of time. And they kept the diversion going up there. They kept the Germans busy up around there,

see, so they were more or less working in two areas and that helped destroy the Germans because they had too much on their plate. They couldn't take care of all of those fronts that they had.

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The Honorable Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) presents a
gift to Marie Jordan Speer

Marie Speer at Center in Gold Dress at the
dedication of W.W.I. Memorial in Washington, D.C.
May 2004. In front row, Colin Powell + Donald
Rumsfeld.

EXTENDING A HELPING HAND



Absorbed in his book, 3 year old Eddie Jordan waits patiently for his mother, Marie Jordan, president of the Gold Star Wives of World War II, Inc., to complete her testimony before a Congressional committee in which she asked for increased benefits for widows and children.

PICNIC AT HYDE PARK



Gold Star Wives and their children with Eleanor Roosevelt at a picnic on the lawn of the Roosevelt Hyde Park, N.Y., estate on August 10, 1946. During their visit to Hyde Park, the group placed a floral tribute in the form of a gold star on the grave of Franklin D. Roosevelt, which is located on the grounds of the estate.



The weather was wet and chilly outside, but warm and pleasant inside the American Legion Post on Kostoryz as the GSW Coastal Bend Chapter celebrated the holidays with a Christmas luncheon on December 16.

**Did you remember.....
to pay your dues for 2007?**

Our local chapter treasurer Lurlene Taylor reminds us that dues notices were sent out by the national office before the end of the year. If your notice got lost among your Christmas cards, or if you just forgot, Lurlene asks that you send your dues in now, so you don't miss any newsletters or other mailings.

Our chapter decided that, instead of having fund raisers which can be a drag, we'd just pay chapter dues of \$5 a month for our local expenses. Most of our members prefer to send in \$30 at one time to pay for six months. Mail your local dues to Lurlene Taylor, PO Box 8227, Corpus Christi, TX 78468-8227.

Lurlene's health problem necessitates her staying close to her oxygen supply. With the prospect of spring, and better weather, we hope she will be able to join us at some of our events again. In the meantime, however, she has bravely kept up with her treasurer's duties from her desk at home.

Dates to remember

Iwo Jima Ceremonies at Sherrill Park
10 a.m., Feb. 17, 2007
Following the ceremony we will go to
Town & Country, 4228 S. Alameda
for lunch and a chapter meeting

Coastal Bend Chapter meeting
March 17, 2007
Important: Election of Chapter officers
Time and place to be announced

South Central Region Conference
March 30-31, 2007
Courtyard Marriott
Little Rock, Arkansas

National Convention
July 18-22, 2007
Settle Inn
Branson, Missouri



Each year we receive a complete schedule of patriotic ceremonies to be held at Sherrill Park. The 2007 schedule is enclosed with this newsletter. Please keep the schedule and refer to it during the year and attend whenever you can.

Seats are reserved for us, so come and join us. It's easy to find other Gold Star Wives; they wear yellow! So if you join us, dress in yellow and wear you GSW cap, if you have one.

Are you a 'Notch Victim'?

If you were born between the years 1917 through 1926 as some of you (who will admit it) were, your Social Security checks are up to \$3,000 a year lower than the checks other seniors receive.

Those of you in that older age bracket who are currently receiving social security benefits probably don't even realize that you have been a "notch victim" for years. This inequity came about as a result of changes in the method of computing benefits enacted in the Social Security Amendments of 1977.

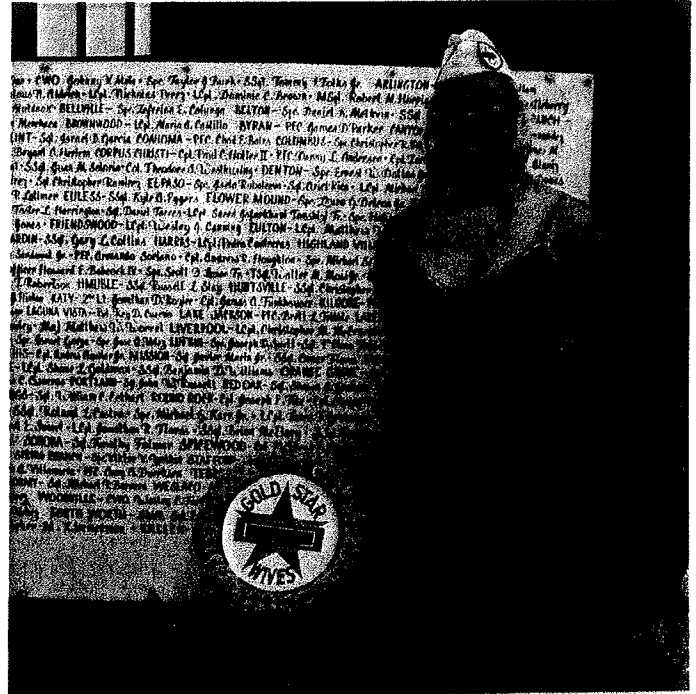
In the 109th US Congress, Rep. Ralph M. Hall (R-TX) had introduced a bill which by a count made in August 2006 had 115 cosponsors. Now, in the 110th Congress, Rep. Hall has again introduced this bill, which already has eight sponsors. The bill (H.R. 368) would make "notch victims" eligible for a \$5,000 settlement or have their benefits calculated under the new rules and have their monthly checks increased. The \$5,000 settlement would not be paid in a lump sum but in four annual payments of \$1,250 each.

Beneficiaries have been advised to go for the \$5,000 settlement because of their advanced age; however, if you want to gamble on living a long time, you might prefer to select the increased monthly benefit, which would, of course, be based on many factors.

What "notch victims" would like to see is for this bill to be taken up independently, and not thrown in with other Social Security amendments, which have been getting nowhere because they are so complicated and proposals so numerous that they remain bogged down in committee. *If this bill drags on the way other Social Security amendments have dragged on, there will be no beneficiaries still alive to receive the settlement or the increased checks.*

Remember, this amendment to correct a long overdue inequity would affect everyone receiving monthly Social Security checks, and not just the older veterans and their survivors.

To move the bill forward, the best help that could be given is to urge your individual congressman to sign on to the bill as a cosponsor to show unified support. Our chapter president, Marie De Leon, has offered to go to the local office of our Congressman, Rep. Solomon Ortiz, to talk to him, and if he's not there, to discuss this concern with his office staff. Remember, this is not a raid on the U.S. treasury for a particular group. This is a correction of an inequity that has deprived rightful beneficiaries from receiving what has been due to them for years.



ORANGE GROVE, TEXAS. A memorial listing 263 names of Texas servicemen and women killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, with 141 of their home towns identified, was dedicated on September 30. Amie Holloway of Rockport, whose husband was killed in Iraq, placed a wreath at the memorial from our Coastal Bend Chapter. Amie's mother and grandmother attended the ceremony, along with Gold Star Wives Marie Speer and Marlene Fordham and VFW State Deputy Commander Dick Prewett.

Cliff and De Kesinger, gold star parents whose son was killed in Iraq, designed and had the memorial built in front of the Orange Grove Museum..

MORE CHAPTER NOTES.....Marie DeLeon, our chapter president, traveled to New York City to see her great granddaughter, an accomplished pianist, perform in Carnegie Hall. What an honor!

....Pearl Gunter, who was installed as secretary and suffered a stroke a short time after, is still not able to get out and about, but keeps in touch with us by email.

....Our chapter had a display table at the Veterans Summit and Fair sponsored by Rep, Solomon Ortiz at the American Bank Center in October, and a few months earlier participated in a similar event in Brownsville. Our thanks to Post Commander Pablo Garza Jr. of the Bill Roper American Legion Post on Kostoryz for allowing us to use the Post for our chapter activities, and also for helping us in many other ways. Several of us have joined the American Legion Auxiliary, and you may want to join, too.