

Good Evening,

I'm proud to say that my name is Robert Losey - Lee, named for my uncle Robert Moffat Losey who was killed here in Dombas, Norway, on April 21, 1940, at the young age of 31 years.

I would like to share with you some information about his life and death but before doing so, I would like to introduce my sister, Robert Losey's niece, Penny Braniff, our cousin, Chris Albers, 3rd cousin to Robert Losey, and our good family friend who has been very instrumental in compiling the history of Robert Losey and very instrumental in our presence here today, Keith Thienemann.

Bob was born in 1908 in a rural farming community in Iowa (about 1000 miles from the Eastern coast of the United States). His father was a Presbyterian minister and was dedicated to serving all denominations. When Bob was 15 years old, living in Montana, his father died of appendicitis. Bob became the head of the household and was responsible for escorting his mother and younger sister, Margaret Lee, my mother, back east to Trenton, New Jersey, where they would be closer to relatives. Bob continued the Losey tradition of serving others by entering the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York, and graduating in 1929. After graduation he attended flight school, received a Masters' Degree in Meteorology and another Masters' in Aero-Engineering. Bob was the first professional meteorologist outside of the Weather Service Department. In January of 1940, he was assigned as Air Attache in Finland to study the effects of sub-zero temperatures on warfare and as an observer for the United States Government. Shortly thereafter Bob was reassigned to Ambassador Florence "Daisy" Harriman, then ambassador to Norway. His reassignment was actually done on the day that Germany invaded Norway. Bob served as an escort for Ambassador Harriman and at the time of his death, was seeking to help evacuate American women and children from Norway to Sweden and to locate the Norwegian General Staff. On April 20, 1940, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Robert Losey was struck in the heart by a German bomb fragment and was killed here in Dombas, Norway, when German bombers swooped down on this important railroad junction in an effort to smash its railroad connections and stop an allied advance.

The death of Captain Losey, the first American serviceman in uniform killed in World War II, was major news of the day. Stories ran in the New York Times, Washington Post and Newsweek detailing his unfortunate demise. His death even elicited a response from the German High command, with Field Marshall Goering, German Minister of Air, sending his condolences. Cordell Hull, the United States Secretary of State, sent his personal condolences to Captain Losey's widow, Kay.

It was not until the early 1980's, some forty years after his death, did Captain Losey receive any permanent memorial to his memory. In 1983, when then ambassador to Norway, Mark Evans Austad, heard for the first time that this tragedy took place in Dombas, he contacted Washington to have the facts verified. Austad quickly set the wheels in motion to create an appropriate memorial to commemorate Bob Losey and the others who lost their lives on that tragic day and in the pursuing years of war.

On August 22, 1987, here in Dombas, Norway, a World War II Norwegian-American Memorial Park was unveiled by Olav V, the King of Norway, who emphasized the brotherly relationship between the United States and Norway and the tremendous efforts of the Norwegian people during the war. "United and true, until Dovre falls" still rings true today. The human heart can be pierced by bomb shrapnel but the heart beat of a people can never be destroyed.

It is an honor for me to stand here today amongst the veterans of the Dombas action and the dedicated local officials who have created this permanent memorial to our uncle. I bring with me the regrets of my mother, Peg Losey Lee, Captain Losey's sister, who was not able to be with us. She does, however, send her thanks, admiration and appreciation to all those who have made this memorial possible and for those participating in these services this weekend.

On the 19th of this month, she will have the opportunity to lay a wreath at her brother's gravesite at the United States Military Academy in West Point during a memorial service arranged by Arthur Svennevik and the Sons of Norway.

On behalf of the Losey family and on behalf of the Americans who both fought in World War II and those of us who only know of those momentous years, our deepest gratitude to all of you here tonight. To the veterans here tonight I would like to quote President Clinton, "We are the children of your sacrifice. We are the sons and daughters you saved from tyranny's reach." Thank you so much.

It is an honor to stand before you and say my name is Robert Losey Lee. On behalf of our mother, Margaret Lee, Robert Losey's sister, and the rest of his relatives, we want to thank all those who have been instrumental in keeping his memory alive. Although he was killed 56 years ago, thousands of miles from his birthplace, he will never be forgotten here or at home. Although our uncle was the the first American killed in WWII, he was just the first of over 292,000 who died. Let this memorial and these memorial services remind us never to let greed, jealousy, and tyranny overcome our desire for peace throughout the world.

In the short time allotted, I would like to give you a quick sketch of the man behind this memorial. Robert Losey's life was well guided and full of accomplishments and promise. His commitment to serve came from his parents. His father, a Presbyterian minister, his mother, a missionary, dedicated their lives to serving rural America. While living in Montana, Bob's father died when Bob was only fifteen. The family moved back East. In 1924 at age 17 he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in the top 100 of the class of 1929 and was described in the yearbook as "one with a fine disregard for useless

restrictions, a spirit not easily rebuffed, a wide interest in science. Upon graduation he entered flight school and then earned Masters Degrees in Meteorology and Aero-engineering from California Institute of Technology, where Bob was portrayed as "one of the smartest students to enter that university."

On Jan. 17, 1940, at age 31, as an Army Flyer and weather expert, he was assigned to duty in Finland as air attache. Shortly after arriving in Finland, he was reassigned to Ambassador Florence "Daisy" Harriman here in Norway.

Your celebration of the Liberation, your remembrance of war, and your recognition of the many sacrifices that millions made to provide peace for succeeding generations is greatly appreciated by friends and families around the world.

It is fitting that we first heard of this Memorial Park through an article in the USA Today paper during the coverage of the 1994 winter Olympic games. What a great host your nation was to the world during these games!

Even though our uncle died thousands of miles from his homeland, you have helped make Noway his home forever.

My sister Penny Braniff, our cousin Chris Albers, and our good family friend Keith Thienemann want to thank all those who have worked so hard to record the history, and implement the creation of this beautiful memorial park. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the wreath laying ceremony with you today and thank you for your warm welcome.

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Frigjøringen 8.mai
DOMBÅS

1945 - 1995
50 år



