

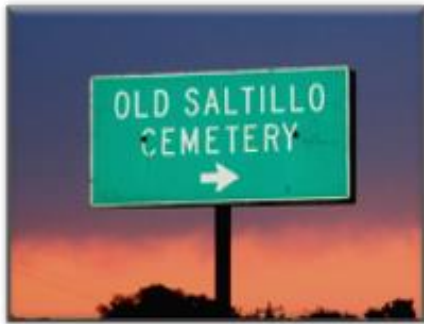
Old Saltillo Cemetery Association Newsletter

P.O. Box 123 Saltillo, Texas, 75478

17th Edition – June 14, 2023

Words From Our President

Hello and welcome to this 17th edition of the OSCA newsletter. As a reminder, between newsletters, we invite you to keep up with the Old Saltillo Cemetery and community events on Facebook at facebook.com/oldsalttillocemetery and/or our website at oldsalttillocemetery.com. Plans are taking shape for the annual Old Saltillo Cemetery Association Business Meeting/Memorial Day, at 10:30 a.m., **July 16, 2023**, in the Old Saltillo United Methodist Church, located at 664 County Road 3357, Saltillo, Texas.



The program will begin with congregational singing led by Steve Conley. The opening ceremony will be followed by a brief business meeting that includes a formal report of the activities of the Board of Directors, the financial position of the association, plans for the coming year, and the election of three Board of Director members for the 2023-2028 term.

A Memorial Program eulogizing loved ones recently buried in the Old Saltillo Cemetery will be observed. Family members present are encouraged to stand to be recognized, as a star is symbolically placed in remembrance of loved ones. Kelli McAfee Tarver and Ginnifer Agee Doyle will present the remembrance. A special musical presentation will be offered by Steve Conley.

This year's featured program will memorialize Second Lieutenant David Murrel Lewis, who was killed in action during World War II, and whose remains have only recently been positively identified. 2nd Lieutenant Lewis' interment in the Old Saltillo Cemetery will immediately follow this special program. Please see page 2 for more details about his life, death and upcoming return to the Old Saltillo Community.



Continued on page 2

Preserving History

The Old Saltillo Cemetery Association places great importance on preserving the cemetery's beautiful old monuments and the valuable information they possess. Over the last 20+ years, OSCA has invested in preserving our rich history by purchasing and installing new monuments at grave sites where the aged monuments have become disfigured, broken and/or the inscriptions have been eroded by time and elements.

In recent years, modest investment earnings have curtailed our ability to continue preservation efforts through the purchase of new markers for these historic sites. Thanks in large part to particularly generous member donations, the OSCA Board of Directors resumed preservation efforts in 2022. Kathy Whitten Patterson (OSCA Historian), Sara Wardrup and Lucas Dennis spearheaded the effort to identify the historic markers in greatest need of attention and obtain competitive bids from multiple monument companies in Northeast Texas.



Thanks to their hard work, in October of 2022, 15 new preservation monuments, purchased through Memorial Monuments of Sulphur Springs, were successfully set in the cemetery. Directors are most pleased with how the monuments turned out and we're deeply appreciative of the diligent work of Kathy, Sara and Luke. The trio continues to research and prioritize additional aged and deteriorated monuments in the cemetery, so we may continue our preservation efforts.

For those unfamiliar with this OSCA practice, all historic stones remain in their original position and the association makes every effort to keep them in good repair. However, when the integrity of the stone is so compromised that it becomes broken or the inscriptions wear to the point that they cannot be easily deciphered, new stones are placed at the burial site, in addition to the historic stones, reflecting

the original inscriptions, easily discernable for those who visit the cemetery.



The OSCA's efforts do not supersede the responsibilities of descendants to keep monuments (considered personal property) in good repair, but when family groups are no longer active in the OSCA or the community, we feel it is our duty, financial resources permitting, to preserve this aspect of Old Saltillo's history.

Thank you to all who have donated to this cause, above and beyond your standard annual contributions to the cemetery, and for your advocacy of this project and others like it which continue to set the Old Saltillo Cemetery apart.

We especially appreciate the efforts of Kathy, Sara and Luke for evidencing our commitment to preserving the history of our community and ancestors.

OSCA Board of Directors

In Memory

The following individuals have been laid to rest in the Old Saltillo Cemetery since last Memorial Day, and will be recognized during our July 2023 program:

Wade J. Hill

July 9, 1944 – August 20, 2022

Jo Ann Castle Agee

October 19, 1935 – October 11, 2022

Stephen Wilburn

February 12, 1947 – December 13, 2022

Margaret Mitchell Crank

September 20, 1931 – May 3, 2023

"A great soul never dies. It brings us together again and again." – Maya Angelou

We also recognize the passing of Kenneth Caldwell, longtime OSCA member and regular Memorial Day attendee.

Spotlight: David Murrel Lewis

Second Lieutenant David Murrel Lewis, son of Ruby Mae Dennis and David Middleton Lewis, was born August 5, 1922. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps as a Private on January 8, 1942, and served with the 345th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) - 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy) - 9th Air Force during World War II.

On August 1, 1943, 2nd Lieutenant Lewis was killed while participating in Operation TIDAL WAVE, a bombing raid against the oil refineries around Ploiesti, Romania. American, Soviet, and British leaders supported a massive strike against the oil refineries at Ploesti. On August 1, 1943, 177 B-24 Liberators, carrying 1,725 American airmen from five different bombardment groups departed from airfields near Benghazi, Libya.



This mission required them to attack targets from unprecedented low altitudes of 100-300 feet. American officials believed low-altitude bombing would be much more precise and would also minimize civilian casualties. It was a daring plan that also proved costly in terms of American lives.

When the Operation TIDAL WAVE aircraft arrived over Ploiesti, pilots were surprised to find German defenders expecting them. Hovering above the city were large barrage balloons, tethered with metal cables. The Germans had also placed anti-aircraft guns along railroad tracks leading to the refineries, amongst the oil tanks themselves, and in fields outside of town. Finally, the Germans opened smoke pots in the fields and set oil tanks around the refineries aflame, sending dense clouds of black smoke to blind the bombers.

2nd Lieutenant Lewis was the co-pilot of one of the 51 B-24 Liberators that failed to return from Operation TIDAL WAVE. Of those, 29 crashed or were forced down away from target, while 22 fell in Ploiesti or the immediate vicinity.

The War Department concluded that 225 airmen perished during Operation TIDAL WAVE. Following the operation, the Romanian government reported they had recovered and buried 216 Americans killed in the raid, 27 of whom were identified. The rest were buried by Romanian citizens as unknowns in a cemetery in Ploiesti.

After World War II, The American Graves Registration Command conducted a large-scale exhumation, recovering dozens of remains that could not be identified but were believed to belong to casualties from August 1, 1943. Each unidentified set of remains was labeled with an "X" and a number, which became the file name for that Unknown.

The AGRC transported the remains from the Romanian cemetery to U.S. military cemeteries in Belgium. Extensive forensic analyses of the remains were conducted, ultimately identifying all but about 80 remains from the Bolovan cemetery. Those that could not be identified were reinterred in Ardennes and Henri-Chapelle which are American Cemeteries in Belgium.

Approval was granted in 2017 for a pilot project to exhume 15 Unknowns associated with the TIDAL WAVE loss. In 2018, the DPAA requested approval to disinter another 71 Operation TIDAL WAVE Unknowns. The request was approved in March of 2019. Following the exhumation, the remains were transferred to the DPAA Laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

U.S. Army Air Force 2nd Lieutenant David Murrel Lewis was killed in action on August 1, 1943 and on May 11, 2022, approximately eighty percent of his remains were identified through extensive DNA testing performed at the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory.

The following events are planned to commemorate 2nd Lieutenant Lewis' return to Hopkins County, Texas, and to further honor the service and sacrifice of all US military veterans.

Saturday, July 15, 2023

Come and Go Reception: 2:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M.
Speakers and Proclamations Beginning at 3:00 P.M.
West Oaks Funeral Home
500 South Hillcrest Drive
Sulphur Springs, TX 75482

Sunday, July 16, 2023

Remains to Lie in State: 9:30 A.M. – 11:15 A.M.
Memorial Service: 10:30 A.M. – 12:00 Noon
Featured Program of
Old Saltillo Cemetery Memorial Day 2023
Old Saltillo United Methodist Church
664 County Road 3357
Saltillo, TX 75478

2nd Lieutenant Lewis' interment in the Old Saltillo Cemetery will immediately follow his memorial service and is open / optional for all Memorial Day attendees.

After almost 80 years, we are bringing him home to be interred beside his mother.

OSCA Board of Directors

Words From Our President, cont...

Following the featured program, a buffet lunch will be served in the air-conditioned Kirby Memorial Center. You are asked to bring some of your favorite dishes... enough to feed all in your party and share some with others. All eating utensils, plates, iced drinks, and coffee will be provided.

Given the widespread interest in our 2023 program, we anticipate higher than usual attendance, so please consider arriving early to secure seating.

Whether you can attend in person, or must support from afar, your essential, tax-deductible financial support is deeply appreciated, to keep the Old Saltillo Cemetery grounds pristine.

Vivian Dennis-Monzingo, President

Old Saltillo Cemetery & Wreaths Across America

Thank you for your support of our cemetery's 2022 participation in Wreaths Across America. Kathy Whitten Patterson and Lucas Dennis once again co-directed our participation and the events of December 17, 2022.

Guy Hatch delivered our keynote address, and the program and wreath-laying was once again a success for our cemetery and community.



Kathy and Luke are again partnering to support our participation in 2023! Please mark your calendars now for the Old Saltillo Cemetery WAA program and wreath-laying on Saturday, December 16th, 2023 at 11:00am.

Wreaths are \$17 each, or opt for the "3 for 2" by purchasing 2 wreaths (\$34) and receive a 3rd wreath free!

Order your wreaths online:

www.wreathscrossamerica.org/TX0987

OR

Old Saltillo Cemetery Association
c/o Lucas & Kathy,
P. O. Box 123 - Saltillo, Texas 75478

Checks payable to: **"Wreaths Across America"**

If you have questions, you may contact:
Kathy 903-434-2343 / Luke 903-588-0973