Godfathership of the Graves of Dead Amer. Soldiers 1945-47
GODPARENTSHIP OF THE GRAVES
OF THE DEAD AMERICAN SOLDIERS,

April 2, 1947

My dear Mrs. Divier:

In answer to your letter, I wish to say that I have had letters from families who state they have been asked for funds.

Further, when I consulted the War Department, I found the American Graves Registration Command does not give its approval to any organization and has not furnished to any group the addresses of next of kin. In fact, it has been extremely careful to withhold any official recognition of such organizations.

I feel, therefore, that it is wiser for me to ask that my name be removed from your list.

I have received the copy of the program of the ceremonies you arranged in September and the pictures. I am afraid my letter thanking you for sending them has gone astray. I appreciate your sending me the pictures.

Very sincerely yours,
GODFATHERSHIP OF THE GRAVES
OF THE DEAD AMERICAN SOLDIERS,
1005, Great Street,
FRAYON-TROOZ (LIEGE)
BELGIUM.

Prayon-Trooz, January 30th, 1947.

Mrs. Eleanor ROOSEVELT,
Apartment 15-A,
29, Washington Square, West,
NEW-YORK, II. N.Y.-U.S.A.

Madam,

We beg to acknowledge receipt of your favour of the 3rd inst., and we dare say we are mostly surprised with its contents.

We should feel much obliged to you to let us know the exact causes that have brought you to such a decision. Not knowing exactly the reasons you have in mind, we should be very thankful if you were kind enough to give us some particulars about this subject.

In order to avoid all suspicion towards our Work, we want to give you a few details on our way of proceeding. When we receive the demands of adoption of a grave, we ask the Office at the Cemetery of Henri-Chapelle, for graves to give to the Godfathers or Godmothers. When we know the soldier's grave, we ask the War Office in Washington to give us the name and address of the family. When we know them, we send them a circular (copy of which we enclose) through which we give them the address of the person taking care for their dead's grave. In this circular, there is a paragraph (which we have surrounded with red) informing the families that all our services are free of charge and that no remuneration whatsoever can be asked for or accepted. We also ask the families to let us know if ever such a case should happen. It is only after having sent this circular that we give the families' name and address to the Godfathers or Godmothers. In acting this way, we just wanted to avoid shameless speculations on the sentiment of gratitude we owe to the great nation of the United States.

Having never received any complaints about such dealings, we are entitled to believe that the solicitation you mention does not concern our Work and that our Members respect the rule we have imposed to ourselves.

p.t.o.
On another side, we must tell you we are not the only ones attending to the adoption of the graves at the Cemetery of Henri-Chapelle. At the Cemetery's Office, they give graves to anybody and often with the name of the soldier's family. We wonder whether it would not be people not belonging to our Work that would have acted in the way you mention. Perhaps it may be that some of them have used without right of our name. That is why, we pray you to be so kind as to give us the name and address of the people who have written to you, so that we may be able to control whether they are in our registers. Could not these people give us the name of their Belgian correspondents.

If persons not belonging to our Work have used without right of our name, or even if Members of our Work have acted so unworthily, we are decided to prosecute them at law here in Belgium.

We assure you that the Members of our Committee are deeply undeceived to see how their devotion, quite of good will, is appreciated in the States. We must tell you however, we have in our files, many letters really kind and full of praise from American families, whose dead we have adopted.

We hope you will understand our position and that you will be so kind as to go into the matter once again and give us satisfaction.

Thanking you in advance for your information, we are, Madam,

Yours very truly,

Lady President, Lady Secretary,

P.S. - Have you received our report on the ceremonies we arranged in September last at the Cemetery of Henri-Chapelle, so as the speech of the President together with pictures of the said ceremonies. We have sent you this report on the 2.12.46.
Dear Sir, Madam,

Deeply conscious of the splendid sacrifice of all those American Soldiers who gave their all and laid down their lives in Belgium for the defense of Liberty and Civilization, our Association has been formed with the object of keeping their memory fresh in our hearts and at the same time, of insuring that their graves in a foreign but friendly and grateful country should never seem to be abandoned or unguarded.

The name of one dear to you has come under our notice, and a friend has been found who wishes to take this grave under his special charge.

This person, who is in possession of your address

is: ..........................................................

..........................................................

..........................................................

and is desirous of getting into communication with you.

He promises to visit the grave of your Soldier regularly, to decorate it with flowers whenever possible and to write to you giving you news and a sort of faint echo across the seas concerning the last resting place of your Son, Brother, Husband or Friend.

We hope this method will be agreeable to you, and will bring some measure of consolation to you in your bereavement.

Our services are entirely free and spontaneous; no remuneration will be either expected or accepted. Should however any such demand be made of you, we beg that you will pay no heed to it, but communicate to us all details of an unworthy act.

Assuring you of our deepest sympathy and respect as well as of our lasting gratitude for the sacrifices made by your noble Nation, that ours might live and be free.

We beg to remain

Yours faithfully

Lady President, Lady Vice President, Lady Secretary, Treasurer,
Make 2 copies of this letter from Belgium—
ded one to the woman,

... I am enc a copy of the letter in which I was asked to appeal mid this group. I thought it was a nice gesture —
Honorary President,

Recently I have had letters from people here who have been selected by the group. I also read a new story issued by the War Dept. Warning people against various groups of this type.

I shall answer it if you wish.
Tell me if you know anything about this group and whether I should send units there to withdraw.
January 5, 1947

Dear Mrs. Divier

When I accepted your invitation to join the Godfathership of the Crown of the Dead American Soldiers, I did not realize that you were going to solicit people in this country.

I have had several letters from people to whom your group has written. In view of this I feel I must resign and ask you to remove my name from your list.

Very sincerely yours,
WAR DEPARTMENT  
WASHINGTON  
December 16, 1946  

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt  
Val-Kill Cottages  
Hyde Park, Dutchess County  
New York  

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I have your note of November 11, 1946, inclosing a letter to you from the Godfathership of the Graves of the Dead American Soldiers, Prayon-Trooz, Belgium, with reference to the United States Military Cemetery Henri-Chapelle, Belgium.

As a result of a preliminary investigation undertaken by the American Graves Registration Command in Europe, I have been advised that this organization appears to be sincere. I have also been advised that it has approximately 220 members who, under the rules of the organization, are not supposed to accept any remuneration from the next of kin of our soldiers who died overseas. From the fact that you have nevertheless received information that persons in this country have been solicited by this group, I continue to have certain doubts concerning it.

These doubts are increased by another statement in the letter which you received from Lady President Y. Divier. She writes that her organization works in conjunction with and with the approval of the American Graves Registration Command. She further states that the latter has endeavored to put her organization in touch with families of the dead and to furnish the addresses of these families in the States. The American Graves Registration Command does not give its approval to any such organization, nor has it furnished to this group or any other group the addresses of the next of kin. In fact, it has been extremely careful to withhold any official recognition of such organizations.

As you know, the War Department provides full care and maintenance for graves in the United States cemeteries overseas. In general, it has found it essential that no intermediary organization should be interposed between it and the next of kin. Similar groups have grown up in this and other countries, but to the best of my knowledge this is the first group which has sought the use of an outstanding American's name.
It is my own opinion, based upon the somewhat fragmentary information which I now have, that if you continue as honorary president you are likely to receive further communications from members of the group or from the next of kin of soldiers who were buried overseas.

I shall immediately forward you any further information concerning this organization which we are able to develop through additional investigation.

Sincerely yours,

Robert P. Patterson
Secretary of War
Prayon-Trooz, the 20 June 1946

Honored Lady,

I have the honor to address you on the subject of the establishment of a "Godfathership of the Graves of the Dead American Soldiers" at Prayon-Trooz, near Liège, Belgium.

The "Godfathers" are individuals, individuals of our country, who undertake to visit the graves of American soldiers who died in this part of the world during the great battles for the Rhine in 1944/1945. The particular cemetery we are interested in is called Henri-Chapelle. It is in Belgian territory not far from the German frontier and situated approximately between Liège (Belgium) and Aachen (Germany).

About 15,000 American soldiers are buried there. The "Godfathers", as we call our members, undertake to lay flowers on the graves as often as possible, to visit them at least once a month, and to take pictures of the graves which they forward to the families of the deceased in the United States, thus testifying to them as best they can that their deceased friend, son, husband or sweetheart is not forgotten or abandoned, but that loving hands strive, however feebly, to signified the appreciation and enduring gratitude which we, the Belgians, feel for the whole generous American Nation and more particularly for the brave fellows who gave their all and laid down their lives to save the smaller nations of Europe from oppression, spoliation and slavery.

Experience, from letters received, has already shown us that our efforts are appreciated, and that the relatives of the deceased are sensible to our efforts, and are glad to receive some news concerning the last resting place of their loved ones.

Needless to say our attentions are entirely voluntary and free. No remuneration of any kind is expected or would be accepted under any circumstances.

To Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Widow of Franklin D. Roosevelt
Late President of the U.S.A.

Hyde Park
Via New York
We may state that our association works in conjunction with, and with the approval of the AMERICAN GRAVES REGISTRATION COMMAND, who with the utmost courtesy endeavor to put us in touch with the families of the dead and to furnish us with their addresses in the States.

Our object in writing to you, Madam, is to beg of you the great favor of consenting to become HONORARY PRESIDENT of our association. The name of the late President of the United States, Franklin D. ROOSEVELT is held in very high honor in this country, his untimely death was deeply and sincerely mourned by many thousands, and we feel that your name, if you will allow us to use it, would lend considerable weight to our work, both in this country and in the States.

On MEMORIAL DAY, May 30th, the American Army organized religious services in the Cemetery, conducted by Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Chaplains, and our ambition would be to arrange, for a future, similar ceremony to be broadcasted in the States, thus enabling the American families with the help of the pictures we send them to realize some sort of contact with the graves of the departed.

The favor of a reply notifying your gracious acceptance of the above request would be greatly appreciated by the Comité of the above association.

We beg to remain, Madam,
yours most respectfully

[Signature]

[Signature]
Physon-Troos, the 20 June 1946

SOLIDARITY OF THE GRAVES
OF THE AMERICAN SOLDIERS
1006 Great Street
Physon-Troos near Liége, Beligum

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt
At the residence of the U.S.A.,
PIERRE
via New York

Dear Madam,

The above association has been formed with the object of enlisting
the sympathy of individual Belgians willing to undertake the personal
care of one or several graves of American Soldiers who died in this
part of the world during the great battles for the Rhine in 1944/45.

The particular Cemetery we are interested in is called MARI-CHAPELLE.
It is in Belgian territory not far from the German frontier and situated
approximately between Liége, Belgium, and Aachen, Germany.

About 18,000 American Soldiers are buried there.

The "Godfathers", as we call our members, undertake to lay flowers
on the graves as often as possible, to visit them at least once a
month, and to take pictures of the graves which they forward to the
families of the deceased in the States thus testifying to them as best
they can that their deceased friend, son, husband, or sweetheart is not
forgotten or abandoned, but that loving hands endeavour, however,
failingly to signify the appreciation and undying gratitude which we,
Belgian feel for the whole generous American Nation and more particularly
for the brave fellows who gave their all and have given their lives to
save the smaller nations of Europe from oppression, spoliation and slavery.

Experience, from letters received has already shown us that our efforts
are appreciated and that the relatives of the deceased are sensible to
our efforts and are glad to receive some news concerning the last
resting place of their loved ones. Needless to say our attentions are
entirely voluntary and free. No remuneration of any kind is expected
or would be accepted under any circumstances.

We may state that our association works in conjunction with, and with
the approval of the AMERICAN CHURCH RELATION COMMAND, and with the
utmost courtesy endeavour to put us in touch with the families of the
dead and to furnish us with their addresses in the States.

Our object in writing to you, Madam, is to beg of you the great favour
of consenting to become HONORARY PRESIDENT of our association. The
name of the late President of the United States, Franklin D. ROOSEVELT
is held in very high honour in this Country. His untimely death was
deeply and sincerely mourned by many thousand, and we feel that your
name, if you will allow us to use it, would lend considerable weight to
our work, both in this country and in the States.
On MEMORIAL DAY, May 30th, the American Army organized religious services in the Cemetery, conducted by Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Chaplains, and our ambition would be to arrange, for a future similar ceremony to be broadcasted in the states thus enabling the American Families with the help of the pictures we send them to realize some sort of contact with the graves of the departed.

The favor of a reply notifying your gracious acceptance of the above request would be greatly appreciated by the Committee of the above association.

We beg to remain, Madam,

Yours most respectfully,

[Signature] [Signed]
SECRETARY

[Signature] [Signed]
LATE PRESIDENT
Campobello Island
New Brunswick, Canada
July 31, 1947

My dear Mrs. Vivier:

Your letter of July 24th has just reached me and I am sorry but I think our Graves Registration people feel it is better not to have committees in foreign countries taking care of the graves of Americans.

Very sincerely yours,
Madam,

The above Committee had been formed with the object of gratefully preserving the memory of the American Soldiers who had laid down their lives so that we should still be able to live in freedom.

We visited their Graves regularly, laid flowers on them and organized Religious Memorial Services in the Cemetery.

Unfortunately for some reason which we have not been able to fathom our activities became the object of inquiries on the part of the Local American Authorities, and, worse although you had graciously consented to become Honorary President of our Association you have now found it necessary to withdraw your authorization. In fact we appear to have become suspect to the American powers that be, which comes as a very unpleasant surprise to us, as we have never pursued any but entirely disinterested motives in our work.

We have inquired several times as to the nature of the distrust which we felt growing around us, even from yourself but we only got vague and unsatisfactory replies to our queries. Major LIE of the American Graves Registration Command told us in the course of an interview that there had been rumours of commercial exploitation of organizations similar to ours, but that ours appeared to be the best conducted, but we nevertheless received another call from Mr EMMET DEWEY the Superintendant of HENRI-CHAPELLE CEMETERY accompanied by Mr MEYERS.
the Belgian Civilian Director of the same, who wished to know whether
we were really entitled to use your name as Honorary President, we
would never have been guilty of the grievous mistake of using your
exalted name unsanctioned.

In our opinion we were doing no more than a gracious act
of gratitude to the Members of the American Armies and Nation and
we are deeply pained at the suspicion which seems to have grown. Our
activities. We may say that we have received numbers of letters from
the FAMILIES in the STATES of deceased Soldiers fallen in this coun-
try, thanking us in touching terms for the work we were doing and
for the news we are able to give them concerning the Last Resting
Place of their Dead.

In view of the present position, and as the American WAR
OFFICE now decline to give us the home addresses of those interest-
ted in the Graves we try to find GODFATHERS for we have deemed it
necessary to wind up our Committee which we did at a general meeting
held in April 23rd 1947. This resolution will not prevent us, either
from attending personally to the Graves we have adopted nor from
corresponding with the Relatives in the States, with several of
whom conditions of friendship have grown up.

we are addressing this letter to you because we cannot
very well offer our resignation to our own selves.

we beg to inform you that all our ARCHIVES are tied
up in bundles, signed and sealed by the Members of the Committee
and will be preserved by our Treasurer Mr Pierre Vivier at the
above address where they will be held at your disposal for inspec-
tion by any properly appointed persons.

We are deeply grieved at the suspicious view taken of
our activities but our grateful thoughts towards the HEROIC DEAD,
and our AFFECTIONATE SYMPATHY with their FAMILIES remain unaltered.

Before we close this letter we would like to state
that in every case where Belgian Families asked to be put into
touch with the Relatives in the States we invariably drew their
attention to our circular which stipulates that all our activities
were entirely disinterested and free and that all our Members
were strictly prohibited from either demanding or accepting any remuneration for their services even under cover. Hence our surprise at the base insinuations which are levelled against us.

We trust you still appreciate our position and our deep regret at finding that our charitable endeavours were interpreted as covering mercantile motives.

we beg to remain

Yours faithfully,

President,
Mrs Jeanne VIVIER

Vice-President,
Miss Simone PIGNAUD

English Secretaries,
Miss Olga TOUSSAINT

Mr Edward BOST

Treasurer,
Mr Pierre VIVIER

French Secretary,
Miss Ghislaine DUBOIS

Assistant Secretaries,
Miss Juliette BECKO

Miss Ninie RICHER

Assistant Treasurer,
Mr Joseph CAJOT

Members,
Mr Georges LEONARD Mr Marcel GAVRAY Mr Albert GALLEY

Mr Jacque HÜNNER Mr Paul REMONT

P.S. - A letter of identical import has been forwarded by today's mail to the following:

1) The WAR OFFICE in WASHINGTON
2) The AMBASSADOR of UNITED STATES in BRUSSELS
3) Colonel JOHNSON to "A.G.R.C." in LIÈGE
4) The BELGO-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
A copy of the enclosed circular was also addressed to all our Members.
Nous vivons actuellement à une époque bien troublée...
Nous réprimons le tri. Nous enlèvons, nous venons, nous appelons
le silence de peur que leurs chers dépouilles ne soient
abandonnées et, qu'on leur ait ôté. Nous espérons
nous enco nous voir demain de leur vouloir continuer
Cette mission que vous avez commencé de si grand cœur.
Pour nous par lui confirmer, chacun à titre personnel, de
votre foi pleine de combien nous avons attaché. Nous
ne devons pas laisser tomber dans l'oubli la foi venue
de nos frères d'armes. Nous sommes certains que vous
nous comprenez tous.
En retournant que les événements de ce plus haute
nous obligea à prendre la décision que nous avons prise,
Nous espérons que la vie faite par nous et qui vous
vous étiez engagé sera poursuivi. Nous vous en
remercions très chaleureusement et non reviendra au nom de nos frères de ceux qui ont fait le
sacrifice de leur vie.

Mme Madame Vivié, Villy
Mévareuse, Giraud
Mélanie, Gras de Bois
Mélanie, le Bourd
Mélanie, le Rose
Mélanie, le Roix
Mélanie, le Saint
M. Colombe, le Bar
M. Pierre, Vivié
M. Joseph, Caye
M. Albert, Gilla
M. Marcel, Gasay
M. Jacques, Hédin
M. Jean, Hénon
M. Paul, Le Mont

Leurs copies conforme

[Signatures]