



World War II Parachute survivor

Rob The rolled-up parachute with only a small piece of bloodstained silk missing was handed over by 88 year-old Renée Le Coadou who, as a little girl, witnessed the heavily-injured Jack Wood falling from the sky on New Year's Eve 1943. She ran to get help from her father who, at great personal risk, hid the parachute on his farm. He summoned the local partisan doctor who immediately undertook to transfer the airman to a safe place. However, they were stopped by a German patrol and Wood was transferred to a hospital in Lannion. There, he was left in such a poor state that even the Germans thought he would die. Somehow, he survived and after several further adventures, returned to the States after the war.

The parachute stayed hidden with Renée always hoping to be able, one day, to return it to the dead airman's family. This, she was delighted to do, having learned that Jack Wood didn't die on that cold night in northern Brittany as she had feared, but peacefully in 2009, surrounded by his family, at the age of 86 in Sacramento, California. Jack Wood's daughter, Mary, spoke for the whole family to a large crowd assembled for the annual commemoration to the Americans who died while liberating France.

Mary It is our distinct honour to have the opportunity to spend this very special Memorial Day with you in recognition of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. Your lovely community changed our family's world. Without the courageous actions of this community 70 years ago our father would have died. He remembered the kindly French doctor and a local farmer who risked all to save and protect an American airman. As a family, we literally owe you our lives. It is with great pride that we are here today. The site where you constructed this memorial generally evokes the true meaning of Memorial Day to us and it is with an open heart that we reconnect collectively with our mutual histories to honour those on both sides of the Atlantic who gave their lives for the ideals that we so cherish. God bless this service and the ghostly legions of patriots who gave their lives that we are honouring today. They are not forgotten. Merci, merci beaucoup."

Rob Jack's son Gary has the parachute in his arms. How does it make you feel, Gary?

Gary Well, it saved his life and we wouldn't be here without it. So, I guess, it, it, ties all of us together and it brings back a lot of memories, and a lot of thanks and a lot of appreciation and, and some sadness, too. I'm happy to be here and I'm certain my dad was, too. It was very moving. The hospitality and the friendship I found here I'll live with for the rest of my life.

Rob Here's Jack's grandson. What do you think of the ceremony so far Scott?

Scott: It's truly an amazing event. We're all very blessed to have our grandfather and the people in his plane so well remembered by the people here in France, in Brittany.

Rob It was very moving to see that parachute, wasn't it?

Scott: It was. For me, it really puts a base to the war and the events that happened. It truly reflects on the sacrifices that the French people made, too, to help my grandfather and all the Americans and English people, who... and everyone who helped in World War II.

Rob But the parachute isn't, after all, travelling back to California with the family. This is Mary again.

Mary We've rededicated it, with a heavy heart, to the Museum because we wanted all the world to understand the uniqueness of this story and him to be back in France.

