



The Southers visit American Airmen's Breton escape routes

Susan: I came to see Yvonne and Doug and they are taking us, following my dad's path when he was escorted out of France by the French resistance and his B-17 plane crashed here and he was wounded and the French helped him with his arm. It's quite fascinating to follow his footsteps.

Mr. S: It's fascinating what we've seen so far, because now we have a visual and practical experience of seeing the journey that her father has gone through, from the time that he parachuted over France here, and then had to walk to find help. We were able to see some of the paths that he's actually walked on, trails of the bicycles that he'd ridden, locations of the houses where he was housed, and how they even escaped. Yvonne and Doug showed us how they actually escaped off the cliffs and on to the boat that took him back over to England. So, in a, in a day and a half, we've seen a lifetime. Really. We didn't know of this experience and Susan didn't know of this experience. Her father never talked about it, and we didn't really realise this until just recently. We knew it would be a challenge to kind of come and do this, but it's worth every time, expense – everything. Now, it's my goal to take this story back to our next generation, and their generation, because it was never taught to us, until now and we've got to make sure that this, this story carries on.

Rob: Your father never told you about any of this adventure?

Susan: He said he liked being in France. He felt at home here. He gave me little bits of information, but no details, no major details about how harrowing it was to go down the cliff. He didn't talk about any of that. And he didn't talk about how hard it was for him to get out of the plane when he jumped out with his parachute. I think the hard part for him was his best friend was killed in that attack.

Mr S: He fell to the ground in some small farm lot here –

Susan: -- that we saw today –

Mr. S: -- that we just went and visited. Before we just came here, we got in contact with his family, who is now our age –

Susan: -- his granddaughter –

Mr. S: -- granddaughter, and she gave us Harley's picture and we were able to take it to the memorial of the town where Harley fell ---

Susan: -- where his name is –

Mr. S: -- where his name is and we were able to at least give him some tribute.

Rob: Can I ask whereabouts you're from in America?

Susan: We live in the Chicago area.



Rob: So, you've been in central Brittany. How different is it?

Susan: Oh, it's beautiful here. Where we live, it's very rural and very agricultural, mostly corn and soybeans. We live in a small town that doesn't have any culture. It, uh, oh it's just stunningly beautiful here. I would live here in a "New York Minute" if I could.

Mr. S: In a way, it's like going back in time, but yet culturally it's present. Yeah. I think it's what is so charming about it. I've travelled a lot in my career and am really surprised that I haven't heard about this much, or been exposed of this part of France as much, but we're sure going to go back home and tell all of our friends about it and how beautiful it is, and how much we enjoyed it.

Rob: Susan, how important do you think it is to retrace the steps of a time in Brittany; it was very difficult?

Susan: I think it is so important that we keep this alive, keep this history so that it is relevant to people. By us doing this, we have very much of a pure sense of what he went through and we can relay that to our children and grandchildren. But, in general, people in the U.S. don't know about this. And, because the generations are ageing, the younger people don't study this in school, they are totally unaware. You know, we need to impress on them how important this history is, because this World War II history could repeat itself.

Mr. S: So many people in the U.S. are familiar with Normandy, D-Day, and many excursions go up to that area. But this area, I feel like we're one of the few people in the U.S. who have had this opportunity. We're grateful for the French resistance that did come to the aid of these young boys. If it wasn't for that, she wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be here and my grandchildren wouldn't be here, so –

Susan: It's , it's ... you almost feel like he's with us. It's very moving.

Mr. S: She might have very much an emotional feeling about it and my emotional feeling is that I have to go back and tell this story to my grandchildren, who are descendants of her father, you know in the tree of life, whatever, and they need to know this, and I hope that the journey allows them to come and see it for themselves, as well. That is my expectation.