

## Interview by Rob with two American Ladies

Rob: And I'm in a marvellous place here, looking over the beach Bonaparte in Plouha, with two ladies who have come from far to be here. I am talking to Beverly Patton Wand and Mary Spinning Shier. Tell me first of all, Beverly, why have you come to Brittany.

Beverly: To remember the people who helped my father to evade after he was shot down over Brittany during World War II, in January of 1944. To remember the people who hid him and helped to transport him and who helped to get him back to England. Plouha is the place of embarkment, there was an organisation from MI9 which brought in two operatives to set up an escape and evasion route on the ground here in Brittany and, um, that's the operation that eventually my father, um, that he connected with. But first it was the people of Brittany who, um, picked him up and hid him without knowing that there was an operation that would help to get him back to England, but who fed him and gave him local clothes to wear. That's also good to recognise.

Rob: And Mary

Mary: Yes

Rob: Is there a connection between you two ladies?

Mary: Yes. Our fathers went out the same night to go back to England but my father was shot down over, er, Picardy, and just north of Aumale, and this past weekend Bev and I were lucky enough to walk in the path of my father. Er, the people who had brought us here, the Thuilliers, had my father's book and they were able to locate each of the steps that my father took. And the people that they asked, some remembered, some didn't, but they were able to make the path and then, er, they also brought us here so that we could talk and visit with people and then also walk in the path of our fathers.

Rob: I'm assuming that it must be very moving for you.

Mary: Absolutely, absolutely.

Rob: How would you summarise the reception that you've had here in Plouah while you've been here?

Beverly: It's a very warm reception. It's an amazing international experience to have a connection to the people of Brittany. Over the years it's been wonderful.

Rob: I understand that there's an organisation in the states that you have set up with your father?

Beverly: The fathers set it up and we are just trying to carry it on in their name as the second generation.

Rob: What is this organisation, exactly?

Beverly: It's called the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society and it was set up in 1964 with a first reunion that included, um, aviators from the United States and Monsieur Branchoux who was the head of, um, resistance in the Guingamp area who arrived with a list of, I believe, 125 aviators who were helped by the Shelburne Operation and it was from that list that the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society got started in the United States. And they came over here on several occasions to find helpers and thank helpers and then they also brought helpers from Brittany and France and then Belgium, and the Netherlands from other lines, um, over to the United States as a thank you gesture and gave them a tour of the United States and they stayed with, um, local people in the United States.

Rob: So there is an exchange going on.

Beverly: An exchange, yes.

Rob: And we have come here to the memorial, above the beach. What is this memorial, first of all?

Beverly: This, um, stell has been put up here to commemorate the operations of Shelburne which brought motor gunboats from England into the small beach that we are looking down upon, and the people on the ground in Brittany brought, um, the aviators down a cliff onto the beach, the boats came from England, and then rowboats took off from the motor gunboats, and came into the beach itself. And the aviators got in and supplies got out of the boats, the supplies went back up the cliff, the aviators went off to the motor gunboat and back to Dartmouth, in England.

Rob: And this memorial is really to commemorate that whole operation.

Beverly: That whole operation, yes. And the people. We remember the people who risked everything to hide and move the aviators.

Rob: It's not the first time you've been to Brittany.

Mary: No, no it been 1969 was the first time and that's when there was a huge party given by the people of Plouah to us. We had probably 80 Americans come out here and all the people from Plouah. Er, each of them got to house an American during that time and the reception was remarkable, the food was fantastic and of course the wine was great, so...

Beverly: It was the beginning for us of a lifetime connection with the people on the coast of Brittany.

Rob: You are regular visitors here. I noticed that the mayor knows you and several other dignitaries put their arms around you as if you are a member of the community, or you're members of the community.

Beverly: We are happy to feel that way, thank you.

Rob: Mary, Beverly, thank you very much indeed.

Mary and Beverly: Thank you. Thank you.

