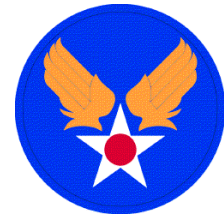


MILFORD ARTHUR WELLINGTON (USAAF)
and
DOREEN ROSE WOODS



One of the entries in the Wood Norton parish register transcripts that is rather different is the record of a marriage which took place in All Saints church on the 30th June 1945:¹

Groom: Milford Arthur Wellington, age 20, single, Grand Rapids, Michigan USA
Mechanic USAAF Deopham Green.

Bride: Doreen Rose Woods, age 18, single, Wood Norton.

It is interesting to see that Wood Norton thus hosted one of the many 'GI Bride' weddings, many of which took place across the region following the deployment of American servicemen to Britain as a result of the United States joining the war following the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor on the 7th December 1941 - indeed, it is estimated that 70,000 war brides left the UK for America between 1942 and 1952.²

The United States, like Britain, instituted conscription during WW2 - what became known as the 'draft'. The *Selective and Training Service Act* (STSA) of 1940 required all men between 21 and 45 to register for the draft, and following Pearl Harbor the Act was further amended extending their potential term of service to the duration of the war plus six months and requiring the registration of all men 18 to 64 years of age. Many of these did not, of course, qualify for service for reasons of health, employment or family commitments. By the end of the war in 1945, 50 million men between 18 and 45 had registered for the draft, with 10 million being inducted into the military.³ Milford registered on the 7th December 1942, aged 18 (see Figure 1).⁴

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER 1. NAME (Print) ORDER NUMBER
W 54 MILFORD ARTHUR WELLINGTON 12796

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)
723 Cornhill NE Grand Rapids Mich

3. MAILING ADDRESS
Grand Rapids Mich

4. TELEPHONE 5-7639 5. AGE IN YEARS 18 6. PLACE OF BIRTH South Haven Mich

DATE OF BIRTH Sept 17 1924

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS
Arthur E. Tap-239 Ave N.E. Grand Rapids Mich

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS
Unemployed

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.
MILFORD A. WELLINGTON

REGISTRAR'S REPORT

RACE	HEIGHT (Approx)		WEIGHT (Approx)		COMPLEXION	
	FEET	INCHES	POUNDS	KILOGRAMS		
White	X	5' 9 1/2"	165		Rather fair	
Negro		Blue	X	Blue	Ruddy	
Indian		Gray		Red	Dark	
Philippine		Brown		Brown	X	Freckled
Japanese		Brown		Black		Light brown
Other Oriental		Black		Gray		Dark brown
				Black		Black

Other obvious physical characteristics that will aid in identification:
Crown of head

I certify that my answers are true; that the person mentioned has read or has had read to him his own answers; that I have witnessed his signature or mark; and that all of his answers of which I have knowledge are true, except as follows:
Crown of head

Registrar for Local Board: J. E. Pierson
Date of registration: Dec 7 1942

LOCAL BOARD NO. 6
Kent County
433 Houseman Bldg.
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Figure 1: Registration Card for Milford Arthur Wellington

¹ Transcript and Index to Wood Norton, Norfolk, Parish Registers, compiled by Keith and Shirley Howell (February 2000), Marriages, 1945 (p.107).

² See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_bride.

³ See: <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/draft-and-wwii>; and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription_in_the_United_States#World_War_II.

⁴ U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

Over two million American servicemen passed through Britain during WW2. In 1944, at the height of activity, up to half a million servicemen were based here with the USAAF (United States Army Air Forces). Their job was to maintain and fly the vast fleets of aircraft needed to attack German cities and industry. Over 200 airfields were occupied or newly built by the USAAF, each one housing around 2,500 men.⁵ Deopham Green (Station Number 142) was such an airfield, constructed in 1942-1943 by John Laing & Sons Limited as a Class A bomber airfield, comprising three runways arranged in an A-shape. The main runway was 2,000 yards long and the two auxiliary runways were each 1,400 yards long. There were two T2-type hangars, 50 hardstandings and temporary buildings to accommodate nearly 3,000 personnel. It was assigned to the 452nd Bomb Group which formed part of the USAAF's Eighth Army Air Force who flew missions from bases across Norfolk in support of the allied war effort. The 452nd Bomb Group arrived in January 1943, commenced operations in January 1944, and ceased operations on the 28th August 1945. They flew B-17 Flying Fortresses, hitting strategic sites in Germany, bombing enemy coastal defences for the 6 June 1944 D-Day landings, and supporting the movement of ground forces across Europe after D-Day.⁶

Milford Arthur Wellington was born on the 17th September 1924 in South Haven, Van Buren, Michigan⁷ and at the time of his registration for the draft was living at 723 Coit Avenue, Grand Rapids, Michigan, with his parents, Milford Lee Wellington (who also registered for the draft, aged 38, on the 16th February 1942) and Myrtle Wellington (nee Estep) and siblings. He was 5' 9½" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and a light complexion. Milford graduated as an auto mechanic from the George A. Davis Vocational and Technical High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1942 (see Figure 2), and was a member of their Cappella choir.⁸

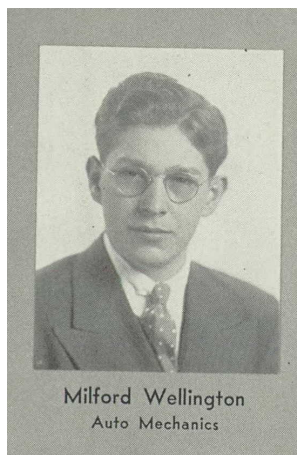


Figure 2: From the 1942 Yearbook

Doreen Rose Woods was born on the 18th September 1926, in North Barsham,⁹ the daughter of Sidney and Rose Woods. Sidney James Woods married Rose Gaskin in December 1925 in North Barsham parish church.¹⁰ Sidney was born on the 3rd January 1899 and Rose was

⁵ See: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/american-airmen-in-britain-during-the-second-world-war>.

⁶ See: <http://www.americanairmuseum.com/place/107>.

⁷ U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁸ U.S. School Yearbooks, 1900-1999 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

⁹ Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 13 June 2018 (*Newspapers.com* by www.ancestry.co.uk); FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1926, Walsingham, Vol. 4b*, p.338 (www.freebmd.org.uk).

¹⁰ FreeBMD, *Quarter to December 1925, Walsingham, Vol.4b*, p.737 (www.freebmd.org.uk); Marriage Banns, North Barsham, 1925 (www.ancestry.co.uk),

born on the 8th June 1904.¹¹ In the 1939 Register, the family are living in Giles Road, Swanton Novers, with four of their children. Sidney died in December 1986, aged 87,¹² and Rose died in January 1983, aged 78.¹³

It seems likely that Milford came to England as a mechanic with the USAAF in 1943. How Milford and Doreen met is not yet known, but there must have been ample opportunity to meet at local events such as dances, through a mutual friend or at church, or perhaps whilst Doreen was working during the war. They married on the 30th June 1945, in Wood Norton parish church (see Figure 3).

1945 Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church of Wood Norton in the County of Norfolk in the Parish								
No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
209	June 30 1945	Milford Arthur Wellington	20	Bachelor	Mechanic U.S.A.A.F.	Despatch Green Norfolk	Milford Lee Wellington	Tose Maker
		Doreen Rose Woods	18	Spinster	—	Wood Norton	Sidney James Woods	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by Harold D. Treat or after banns by me.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Milford Arthur Wellington in the Presence of us, Doreen Rose Woods, Harold D. Treat, Joyce Evelyn Hudgell, A.R.A. Lawender, Vicar of Wood Norton.

Figure 3: Marriage Certificate, 30th June 1945

Following the end of the war, Milford returned to the United States on the 1st October 1945 with the 359th Fighter Group which had been stationed at East Wretham (RAF Station No. 133).¹⁴ It appears that Doreen followed her husband to the United States a year later in 1946, sailing on the United States Army Transport *Henry Gibbins* and arriving in New York on the 27th October 1946.¹⁵ Doreen was aged 20, and embarking on a new life in America. Doreen and Milford's first child, Malcolm Arthur Wellington, was born on the 5th September 1948, in Fort Worth, Texas.¹⁶

In 1950, Doreen sailed with her son Malcolm (aged 1) from Port Hamilton, New York to Bremerhaven, Germany (bound for Weisbaden, Germany) aboard the United States Army Transport *General Maurice Rose*. The *General Maurice Rose* arrived in Southampton on the 11th January 1950.¹⁷ Interestingly, Malcom was baptised in Wood Norton church on the 7th May 1950, and the baptism register notes that Malcom's father was a Sergeant with the United States Army in Germany, and the address in Wood Norton is given as Council Houses (where presumably Doreen's family were living at the time).

Doreen must then have travelled back to Germany, as their second child, James Lee Wellington, was born there on the 22 October 1951. In 1952, Doreen arrived in New York aboard the United States Navy Transport *Alexander M. Patch*, which had sailed from Bremerhaven, Germany, on the 28th July 1952 arriving in New York on the 5th August 1952.

¹¹ 1939 England and Wales Register, Walsingham RDC, Enumeration District TSBS, Schedule 9 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹² England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹³ England and Wales Civil Registration Death Index, 1916-2007 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁴ United States, Passenger and Crew Lists, New York City Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 (www.findmypast.co.uk).

¹⁵ New York, Incoming Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁶ Find A Grave Memorial (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁷ UK and Ireland Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878-1960 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

Doreen was accompanied by her two sons, Malcolm (aged 3½) and James (aged 9 months) and brought with her 4 suitcases and 3 packages. Their destination address was given as 723 Coit Ave, Grand Rapids (the address of Milford's parents).¹⁸ The birth of two more children followed: Paul Robert Wellington, born 20th September 1955 in Rantoul, Illinois,¹⁹ and Brenda Wellington (date of birth not known).

Doreen and Milford lived on several military bases during their married life, and finally settled with their family in Great Falls, Montana, in 1964, having moved from Grand Rapids, Michigan. On the 3rd January 1946 Milford had enlisted at Detroit as a Private in the Hawaiian Department of the Air Corps.²⁰ He served for 32 years in the military, and between 1964 and 1970 was based at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, Montana, leaving the military on the 30 April 1970.²¹ Doreen and Milford divorced on the 6th November 1970 (they both went on to remarry). Milford Arthur "Duke" Wellington died on the 26th April 1988, aged 64, at his home in Lowell, Michigan.²²

Doreen died on the 11th April 2018, aged 91 in Great Falls, Montana.²³ Her obituary, which included a photograph (see Figure 4), appeared in the Great Falls Tribune on the 13th June 2018.



Figure 4: Photograph of Doreen from her Obituary

It recounts how she used to cycle to work at a college in Norwich during the war and would sometimes have to go to a bomb shelter during air raids; she found it a very stressful time. She became a US Citizen on the 26th April 1957, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After moving to Great Falls she worked at the Children's Receiving Home until she decided to retire, aged 89.²⁴ Sadly, Doreen was predeceased by her son Paul, who died on the 30th April 1973 aged 17 in Houston, Texas, as the result of an automobile accident.²⁵ Doreen's eldest son, Malcolm, died on the 6th March 2019, aged 70, in Great Falls, Montana.²⁶

¹⁸ New York, Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island, (1820-1957 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

¹⁹ Texas, Death Certificate, 1903-1982 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 4th May 1973 (*Newspapers.com* by www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁰ U.S., World War II Army Enlistment Records, 1938-1946 (www.ancestry.co.uk); U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²¹ Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 29th April 1988 (*Newspapers.com* by www.ancestry.co.uk); U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010 (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²² Michigan, Death Index, 1971-1966 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 29th April 1988 (www.newspapers.com).

²³ *Newspapers.com* Obituary Index, 1800s-current (www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁴ Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 13th June 2018 (*Newspapers.com* by www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁵ Texas, Death Certificates, 1903-1982 (www.ancestry.co.uk); Obituary, *Great Falls Tribune*, 4th May 1973 (*Newspapers.com* by www.ancestry.co.uk).

²⁶ Find A Grave Memorial (www.ancestry.co.uk).