

D-Day: Stories from the Walls



Grace and Jack Busse: A Wartime Romance

During the Maritime Archaeology Trust's National Lottery Heritage Funded D-Day Stories from the Walls project, volunteers undertook online research into topics and themes linked to D-Day, Southampton, ships and people during the Second World War.

Their findings were used to support project outreach and dissemination.

This Research Article was undertaken by one of our volunteers and represents many hours of hard and diligent work. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our amazing volunteers.

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John (Jack) Theodore Busse & Grace Busse nee Waite

During the deployment at Southampton of American troops in preparation for D-Day in 1943, Lieutenant John Busse, a Military Policeman attached to the 14th Port Provost Corps in the US Army met Lieutenant Grace Waite of the US Army Nurse Corps. They would marry after the war. John, known as Jack, was a good friend of Dalton Newfield, also an American M.P. who was the wartime Provost of the Port, and a keen photographer. He left behind an archive of photographs recording the lives of his American buddies in Southampton.



John & Grace – Southampton UK December 1943 or 1944
Source: *Southampton and D-Day* [70] Ingrid Peckham et al
for Southampton City Council 1994.
Photo: Dalton Newfield, Provost of the Port

John Theodore Busse jnr (known as Jack) was born¹ at Brookville, Elk County, Pennsylvania in June 1909 to Minnie Edna Busse and John Theodore Busse snr. Sadly, his father died before he was born. In the 1930s, John married Elsie, *nee May Vair*, and they had 3 children. The youngest child, Ronald Charles, born on Christmas Day 1931 in Akron but who sadly died 5 days later. From the 1940 census, John owns his house in Charlestown, Portage County, Ohio, and worked as a school bus driver.

Grace Waite was born on 7 November 1913 in La Salle, Niagara County, New York, to Vernor Truman and Ruth Lenore Waite. Grace was the 4th of six children, and at the 1920 US census, Grace and family lived in Reliance Avenue, La Salle, New York. Grace's two youngest brothers also served during WW2. Martin Samuel Waite was a sergeant gunner in the USAAF WWII 308th Bomber Group, 373rd Bomber Squadron, and he ²died aged 28 on 28 May 1944 when the aircraft he was in went missing, having departed US Air Base at Lingling, China during conditions "overcast with thunderstorms". Vernor jnr joined the cavalry as a private in the National Guard

A Grace Waite is listed as single in the 1940 US census living and working as a trained nurse at Brooklyn Hospital Nurses' Home but it is unclear if this is "our" Grace – (Grace Waite is name which often features, a number being born in the same year as "our" Grace).

Grace ³enlisted on 1 December 1941 at ⁴Fort Dix, New Jersey, and her married name of Busse is used in subsequent Army documents. She served in "domestic service" between 7 December 1941 and 7 October 1943, in "foreign service" between 8 October 1943 and 2 September 1945, then again in "domestic service" between 3 September 1945 and 15 February 1946 when she was honourably discharged at Camp Sibert, Alabama which was a temporary 1942-45 facility for training including chemical warfare. Grace was a 1st lieutenant in the US Army Nurse Corps, and was posted to Southampton, UK where in December 1943 John and Grace met – however, Grace was part of the 79th General Hospital which initially was based at Moira in Ireland until 19 October 1943, then in England until 4 May 1945 when it closed down before reopening in France on 21 June 1945. It is understood Grace also served in Germany for a short period until the end of August 1945. (The US Army Nurse Corps

had ⁵32,500 nurses serving overseas in all theatres of the Second World War, and in Europe, the first evacuation hospitals with their complements of nurses landed in Normandy on 10 June 1944).

John, Army serial number 35513614, was a Lieutenant in the US Military Police or Provost Corps, part of the American 14th Port by then established in Southampton, England. He had ⁶enlisted on 28 September 1942 at Cleveland, Ohio (Branch Immaterial - Warrant Officers, USA) and his details indicate that he was 1.7m and 59 kg. John served in Southampton until the end of the war.



Source both images: https://www.ancestry.co.uk/mediaui-viewer/collection/1030/tree/109681240/person/382113353712/media/da396596-58ea-46ba-bbec-f65254be98557_phsrcePKR1738&usePUBjs=true

John and Grace were ⁷married on 5 October 1946 by the ⁸Reverend Stahl at St. John's Lutheran Church, Sinking Valley, Pennsylvania. Grace had been discharged from the military but John was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland where they intended to make their home, Grace continuing her nursing career. By May 1950, they resided in Altoona, Blair, Pennsylvania. However, John was serving during the Korean war (25 June 1950-27 July 1953) and was discharged thereafter, having been promoted to Captain. John and Grace had 4 children.

Grace died on 15 January 1991 at Ridge Manor, Hernando County, Florida and was interred on 1 February 1991 at Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell, Sumter County, Florida. John died on 13 October 1991, also at Ridge Manor and was also interred at the same plot in Florida National Cemetery.

John's Obituary

JOHN THEODORE BUSSE, 82, of Ridge Manor died Sunday in Zephyrhills. A native of St. Marys, Pa., he moved to this area 12 years ago. He was a retired captain of the U.S. Army and a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. He is survived by three daughters, Linda B. Boccuti of Atlanta, Ruth E. Hayes of Nashville, Tenn., and Ramona G. Horton of Asheville, N.C.; three sons, James of White Hall, Va., John T. Jr. of Glens Falls, N.Y., and Richard L. of Zephyrhills; 17 grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. Oaks Cremation, Dade City.

Source: The Tampa Tribune (Florida) 16 October 1991
<https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/obituaries/obit/0FCCA47668DCC7DC-0FCCA47668DCC7DC>

Grace's Obituary

GRACE WAITE BUSSE, 77, of Ridge Manor, died Tuesday at her home. A native of Niagara Falls, N.Y., she wintered here from Sinking Valley, Pa. She was a retired registered nurse, a veteran of World War II, serving in the U.S. Army, and a Lutheran. She is survived by her husband, John T.; two daughters, Ruth E. of Nashville, Tenn., and Linda G. of Atlanta; two sons, John Jr. of Glens Falls, N.Y., and James A. of White Hall, Va.; a stepson, Richard L. of Zephyrhills; and a stepdaughter, Ramona G. Horton of Asheville, N.C.. Oaks Cremation, Dade City.

Source: The Tampa Tribune (Florida) 17 January 1991
<https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/obituaries/obit/0FCCA43C436EFEE1-0FCCA43C436EFEE1>



Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3979542/john-t.-busse>



Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/145227982>

Further reading:

U.S. Army Medical department (AMEDD). Center of History and Heritage. Inventory of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) Collection. Not available on-line but referenced at <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/342056.pdf>

The Army Nurse Corps. Accessed December 2019. Available at <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/72-14/72-14.HTM>

Bibliography references: Note: Ancestry website needs to be open when accessing any of the bibliography.

¹ Ancestry. Accessed December 2019. Available at https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/60484/46629_2421401755_0098-012477pid=799918&backurl=https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=3D60484&26h%3D799918%26indiv%3Dtry%26o_vc%3DRecord.OtherRecord%26rhSource%3D8750&treid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBIs=true&_ga=2.2163186.354100698.1576335977-1386200924.1550233706

² Find a Grave. Accessed January 2020. Available at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/19789779>

³ Ancestry. Accessed December 2019. Available at https://www.ancestry.co.uk/interactive/3147/43191_182029006040_0863-02291?pid=1004565&backurl=https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/106124457/person/290195166254/gallery&usePUB=true&_phsrc=FkR1634&usePUBJs=true

⁴ Wikipedia. Accessed December 2019. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Dix

⁵ YouTube. Accessed January 2020. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDExHl_aVQ8&list=UUiPX96iTaNB54dg8VZYxxw&index=1

⁶ Ancestry. Accessed 2019. Available at https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=8939&h=3726593&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=2442&requ=281474977005568&ur=0&lang=en-GB

⁷ Ancestry. Accessed December 2019. Available at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/7314846/person/280071973813/facts>

⁸ Altona Mirror Newspaper, 18 October 1946. Hard Copy.