

ROBERT JAMES KEHOE: His Story
By Cathy Gowdy

On July 12th, 2012, I found a query on Ancestry.com's Marin County message board which read in part "Hi there, I am Andy from the Netherlands. My boys and I we adopted 5 graves of soldiers who died in ww2. We take care of their graves and go there every week to bring flowers etc. I started a website www.remember-our-heroes.nl its also in English, about these boys, they were all crew members of a B-17, and my interest was getting bigger and bigger, now I am writing or try to write a story of all the boys they flew with and also unfortunately, died. I am looking for any contact with people who can tell me about: Robert James Kehoe, 1921 – 1944, 2nd Lt., 0-752209, Marin..."

I went to Andy's website and read about the young men he profiled and whose graves he visits. I like the idea of expanding the site to include something about the other young men in the squadron who flew the bombers and died during the War.

I visited the California Room at the Civic Center library and learned that Robert J. Kehoe, born August 10, 1921 in Marin County, California, and a resident of Marin County, enlisted July 8, 1942 in San Francisco for the duration of the War, Warrant Officers branch. He had had a year of college and worked as a lab technician/assistant. He was single, without dependents and is described as almost 6 feet in height and weighing 162 pounds. He attained the rank of 2nd lieutenant in the 614th Bomber Squadron, 401st Bombardment Group. His plane was shot down over Germany on April 11th, 1944 and he is buried in Europe. He was awarded a Purple Heart, an Air Medal and other Army awards.

The 1930 census of Marin County reveals that Robert James Kehoe, then 8 years old, was the son of James V. and Alma Kehoe of Point Reyes Station who owned and operated a dairy farm. He had a younger brother Charles, born about 1927. The 1940 census shows us that a third son was born to the family about 1933 and named Kenneth. Robert James, now 18, gave an occupation of tractor operator.

Born in San Francisco, James V. Kehoe was a Marin County supervisor for 15 years, and operated a dairy ranch on Pierce Point Road. He worked as a trick-rider in 1914-1915 for the San Francisco Pan-Pacific Exposition. After that he did the rodeo circuit for four years. He even appeared in a silent film shot in San Rafael called "The Heart of Juanita."

The Kehoe family continues to ranch on Pierce Point Road and many descendants of the two younger brothers are still living in the area. One of these, Tim Kehoe, son of Kenneth, known as Skip, provided a photo of Robert James Kehoe in uniform and told me something about his uncle.

Robert attended Tomales High School, staying in Tomales with his grandparents, Ed and Lizzie Bean, while school was in session. He graduated from Tomales High School in 1938. The following year he attended Washington State University where he was a resident of Waller Hall, and I am told was interested in becoming a veterinarian. His photo appears in the WSU 1939 yearbook as one of the Waller Hall boys.



<http://content.wsulibs.wsu.edu/cdm/search/collection/chinook/searchterm/Robert%20James%20Kehoe/order/nosort>

At the time of his enlistment, he was working as a milk tester for the dairies, going from farm to farm and taking samples from the cows and testing butterfat content among other tests. I suppose that explains the occupation of “lab technician.”



This photo of Robert James Kehoe is courtesy of the Kehoe family. He is buried at Ardennes American Cemetery located near the southeast edge of Neupre, 12 miles southwest of Liege, Belgium. The photo of the tombstone is courtesy of Andy Swinnen of the Netherlands.