

**Speech by Governor Theo Bovens, King's Commissioner of Limburg Province,  
Memorial Day May 24, 2020, Margraten**

Majesty,  
Excellences,  
Generals,  
Veterans and people at home,

*Anyone who grows up here in Limburg,  
grows up with this "Margraten".*

I too came here as a young boy.  
And even though you didn't know exactly what this place  
was all about, you could just *feel* it was special.

Walking past those long walls with all those names,  
the reflecting pool,  
the tower with the chapel,  
...and then... the sight of all of those crosses,  
*all* those white crosses...

it left you speechless ...  
even though you had *no idea* what they stood for...

*That idea* only comes when the generation before you starts to tell:

- how lucky they were with a 'quick and early' liberation;
- how they celebrated their freedom with their liberators;
- how they took them in their homes;
- and how they watched them leave again, to return to the front, to the Ardennes or the German Ruhr area...

This older generation also tells you:

- how painful it was to see all those heroes return dead;  
and
- how they began to adopt their graves;
- and made *contact* with the next of kin.

And with this *contact* came the photos, and the stories.

Photos of young faces,  
looking tough in their uniforms,  
or vulnerable, with a baby in their arms.

And the stories about:  
where they came from,  
what their dreams were,  
who they loved...

*Anyone who grows up here in Limburg,*  
knows these photos and stories of those ten thousand souls  
who stayed here with us; and whose graves and names  
pass from generation to generation. They are *all* still  
adopted.

I adopted the grave of Marx "Mike" Larkin.

I know he was a cheerful looking guy, loved by his pals.

And I know he was from New York, Brooklyn.

There, he worked in a clothing store,

but here,

he fought his way through France, Luxembourg and  
Germany.

But he couldn't win his last battle.

It was in Waltersleben, Germany,

on April 11, 1945,

that Mike lost his life,

his wife Marie her husband,

his daughter Sandy, her father.

His daughter Sandy, who *I* now know better than *he* ever had the chance to. She and I have met a few times now, and we follow each other on Facebook..

... but every time we're in touch  
I realize all the more,  
that we live here in peace  
because on the other side of the world  
a little girl grew up without a father.

*Anyone who grows up here in Limburg* - in the Netherlands  
- must *never forget* all these souls who gave their lives for  
our freedom.

... *never forget* them as the best remedy for the even more  
evil virus back then...

They all came here to fight it, for us.

For that, we will always be grateful to them.

Always!