

# BARRY GI *BRIDES* MAGAZINE

July 2010 Number Nine



Bill and Irene Fredholm (nee Spierling)

## Welcome to B.G.I.B.M. Number Nine!

So far there has been little mention of **US sailors** marrying local lasses. Well, it is time to correct that!

### IRENE and WILLIAM

A few years ago Mr Terry Spierling of Barry put me in touch with his aunt, **Irene Fredholm**. This is some of her story:

“My husband, Bill, was in the United States Navy Armed Guard serving on **USS John Merrick**. Bill had made 24 trips to France but on the 25<sup>th</sup> his ship hit a mine. The “**JM**” made it back to port and was repaired. She headed back out to sea again but the rivets did not hold, so returned to **Barry** to be repaired again.



Not the John Merrick, but a good profile of a Liberty ship

We met **October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944** – if the ship had not needed more work we would not have met. I was fifteen and Bill was nineteen, but I lied and said I was 18 years old. We met in Holton Road, the main shopping street, and walked to Barry Island. There were no busses on Sundays. We spent about five hours there and then headed back to Cadoxtan, at the other end of town. I had to be home by the 9.30pm curfew and Heaven Forbid that I talked to a Yank!

The John Merrick was one of a number of Liberty ships named in honour of African-Americans

The following item culled from the Internet sheds some further light upon some of the wartime voyages of the **JM** as part of Operation Neptune the maritime component of Operation Overlord. It comes from a member of the Navy Armed Guard whose role it was to defend the ship...

**WALTER L. MAGALIS**

"My second ship was another Liberty, the **SS JOHN MERRICK**. We saw a lot of action. We were in the invasion of France in June 1944. It made 21 voyages ferrying troops, tanks and supplies between English ports and Utah Beach.

"I found that the anticipation was worse than the action. You know you're going to England. You're a nervous wreck. I was scared to death. You sleep with your shoes on, your helmet on, your lifejacket on. Scared to death. Then it's time to work. You cool off and your training takes over.

"We were busy. We brought troops from Portsmouth, England, to Utah Beach. The troops and gear were deck load only. Troops, trucks and tanks each load. You load and unload quickly and get out of there and go back and load and unload another deck load. We made 21 trips back and forth to Utah Beach.

"As I say, once the *stuff* hits the fan, your training takes over. We came under fire. German planes shooting at you. You look through your sights. You're going 10 miles an hour, plane's going 200 miles an hour: you shoot one foot ahead of the plane. I shot a lot, aft end, port side. A buddy says, "You got him, you got him." He congratulates me. Hell, no, I had shot part of my own rigging on our ship.

"Many kinds of things happened. I know we hit German planes and sent them down. We also hit some of our own too. We also hit our own rigging. We were hit. We also hit a magnetic German mine. Blast blew the propeller off! Ship was fixed. We were lucky. No one got wounded. They were busy hours. About 6,000 ships took part."

[http://www.liberty-ship.com/html/people/magalis\\_walter.html](http://www.liberty-ship.com/html/people/magalis_walter.html)

<i>SS John Merrick</i>	Hull number:1990	Laid down: 12 <sup>th</sup> June 1943	Launched: 11 <sup>th</sup> July 1943	Scrapped 1967
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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Liberty\\_ships\\_\(Je%E2%80%93L\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Liberty_ships_(Je%E2%80%93L))

We wrote to each other for **thirty-seven months**. During the first year all Bill's letters to me were sent to my girlfriend's house. I then told my father I was writing to a Yank and he was not too pleased, but I gave Bill my correct address.

I never thought I would go to America and neither did my dad. Bill sent me an engagement ring in **July 1946** when he was discharged from the Navy and had hopes of coming to Barry so that we could get married.

## Barry Herald

Friday May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1946

### FREDHOLM – SPIERLING

The engagement is announced between **Irene**, daughter of Mr and Mrs Spierling, Three Bells Inn, Cadoxton, and **William**, only son of Mr and Mrs C. Fredholm, of Moline, Illinois, U.S.A.

## OVER THE ATLANTIC:

However, his dad came down with cancer and died in **January 1947**. So that's when it was decided I should go to America instead. It was very hard to get a visa. The first one was for six months but I couldn't get a passage in time so I had to go through the same procedure over again. Finally, I flew on **November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1947** from London to New York. The flight took **18 hours** the weather was so bad. We had to land at a US Air Force base in Stephenville, Newfoundland, as we were very low on fuel.

"Stephenville is located on the west coast of the island portion of the Canadian Province of Newfoundland and Labrador."

From New York I flew to Chicago and then another plane to Moline, Illinois. I arrived on **November 19<sup>th</sup>** to be met by the local newspaper and, of course, Bill and his mother.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF USA:

My impression of the USA blew my mind: stores lit up; beautiful clothes and shoes; food galore. Even before the war I hadn't seen one iota of such marvellous sights. The nearest I ever came was the pantomime when I saw Cinderella in Cardiff in 1946.

## OPPOSITION:

However, I didn't get a warm welcome from Bill's mother as she was against our getting married and made life a bit of Hell. We were to be married on **Saturday December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1947**, but two days before that I had decided to call it off and to return home. Bill was against that so we talked to the minister on the Friday and he decided to marry us that evening, **19<sup>th</sup> December**. The church was being decorated for the Christmas services so we did have a few people to witness the occasion and to offer congratulations. It was very sad at first but through the years we'd have a laugh about our wedding – no honeymoon, no money! We rented a room for \$10 a week.

Bill's mom was born, in Wolverhampton, England. Her family immigrated to Canada and then to the USA. She passed away in **October 2003 at the age of 103 ½ years!** Barry, Linnea (my children) and I drove to Moline, Illinois, for her funeral.

The Fredholms were from Sweden arriving in America around 1915. They were so good to me; they became my family. I can't say a word against them and they, too, had trouble with Bill's mother.

### Barry & District News

Friday January 14<sup>th</sup> 1949

**FREDHOLM**

On January 2<sup>nd</sup> at East Moline, U.S.A., to **Irene (nee Spierling) and Bill**, the gift of a son.

Irene and Bill's two children, **Barry** (1949) and **Linnea** (1961) were born in the USA, where they still reside. I would be delighted if they would make contact so that I could send them a copy of this magazine – GB

We moved to Ohio in 1954 and Bill retired from the Ford Motor Company in 1986 and he died in 1993. We had a good life in Ohio and made lots of new friends there. I am very happy that I decided to stay in the USA.

## EVENTFUL TRIPS BACK HOME:

I have been back to Barry four times.

**1955** – Barry and I came home for six weeks. We left New York, the plane lost two engines over the Atlantic and we returned to New York, barely.

**1963** – All four of us crossed over the Pond. At Cleveland (Ohio) we had to disembark because someone had called that there was a bomb onboard. We nearly missed our connecting flight out of Toronto, Canada.

**1966** – Bill, Linnea and I flew home and arrived in Barry around 7:00am. My dad had just been taken to hospital. I did get to visit with him for a few hours but he passed away early the next morning.

**1975** – We made another trip. We arrived OK and went to France, Spain and Switzerland. We flew home on a Jumbo jet but due to a strike by food handlers we were diverted from London to Scotland. We blew a jet engine when we landed so we sat on the runway for four hours. We finally spent the night at the **Turnburry Hotel**.



Some passengers were not allowed back on the plane as their kids had come down with the measles – it wasn't a nice trip for those families. I've not taken an overseas trip since then.

## DOWN MEMORY LANE:

I remember a "cuppa" with my mom in Woolworths; an ice cream cone with a Cadbury flake inside.

I understand that Holton Road (Barry's main shopping street) is not the same as I remember it to be, neither is Pencoedtre Lane.

Someday I might make a trip home. I'd like to walk the beach and go up Pencoedtre Lane to pick some violets and primroses and some shivery Shakes".

*Sadly, Irene's wishes were not to be fulfilled...*

### Barry & District News

Thursday January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007

OBITUARY:

## FREDHOLM (nee SPIERLING)

**Irene**, aged 77 years, wife of the late **William**, died suddenly on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 at her home in Streetsboro, Ohio.

Irene was born in Barry (in 1929) and migrated to the USA in 1947.

"**Rene**" is survived by her son, **Barry**, daughter, **Linnea**, grandchildren, great grandchildren and sisters **Olwen** and **Norma Jean** (all in the USA).

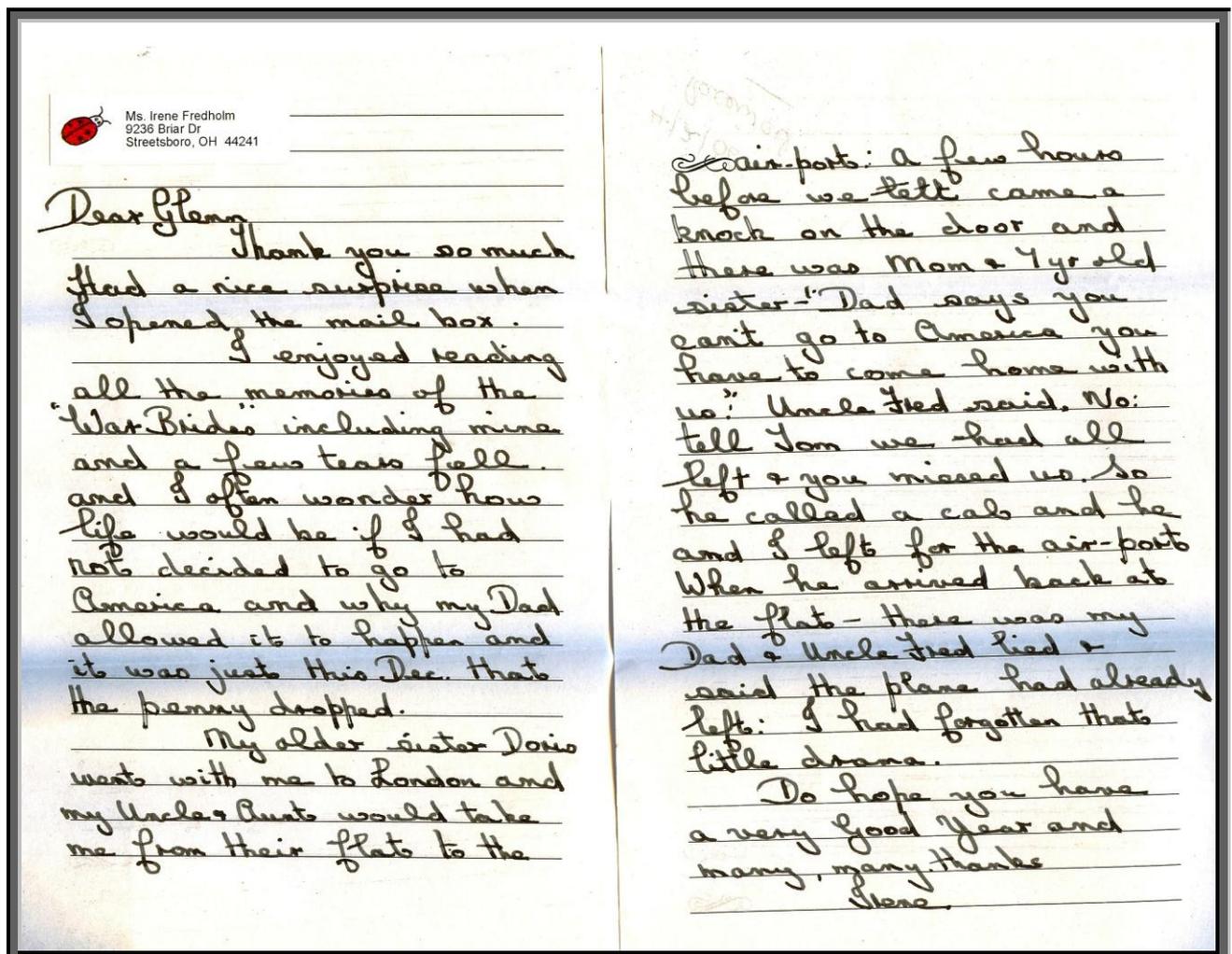
She was pre-deceased by her sisters and brothers, **Betty**, **Doris**, **Tommo**, **Phil** and **Sylvia**.

Sorely missed by family and friends on both sides of the "Pond".

## A FORGOTTEN "LITTLE" DRAMA

Irene wrote to me to explain how her life in America almost never came to pass. Paternal opposition to a young woman leaving home for a far away country was not unusual back then. In this case a big lie was required – a conspiracy, even – before Irene could leave England for America.

I never did ask Irene whether her father eventually came round to see things differently...GB



Before we move on to **other** GI Brides, a request: If you know anything about GI Brides that you would like to pass on or if you have memories of the "friendly invasion" of Barry by Americans please get in touch:

[Glenn.booker501@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Glenn.booker501@yahoo.co.uk)

01446 741886

8 Hillside Close Barry CF63 2QP UK

## TWO FROM TENNESSEE

**Two Grooms** from the "Volunteer State" but I wonder if they might also have been from the same unit: the **115<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion?**

### Barry & District News

Friday April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1944

#### McCLOUD – GOLDING

The wedding was solemnised by special licence at the **Old Village Church, Cadoxton,**



Old Village Church, 1920

<http://www.barrywales.co.uk/showimage.asp?ID=665>

on Saturday of **Miss Jean Myra Golding**, second daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Golding, Biglis Farm, Cadoxton, Barry, to **Private Leslie McCloud**, US Army, youngest son of Mr and Mrs L. McCloud of Tennessee, USA.... The best man was **Sergeant McDaniels**, US Army. (?)

### Barry & District News

Friday June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944 & BH

#### ANDREWS – SHIRE

The wedding took place at St Mary's Church, Barry Dock, on Saturday, of **Miss Maureen Shire**, youngest daughter of Mrs and the late Mr W. H. Shire, Woodlands Road, Barry Dock and **Staff Sergeant Edward T. Andrews**, US Army, Memphis, Tennessee.

## Barry & District News

Friday December 29<sup>th</sup>, 1944

### SOTO – BALDWIN

The wedding took place recently at the Register Office, Cardiff, between **Miss Betty Baldwin, WAAF**, only daughter of Mr and Mrs P. Baldwin, Claude Road, Barry and **Mr Rene Soto**, eldest son of Mr and Mrs M. Soto, Tampa, Florida, USA... Mr Soto is in the **American Merchant Navy**.

**Another sailor!**

## Barry & District News

Friday November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944

### WHITE – HOLLINSHEAD

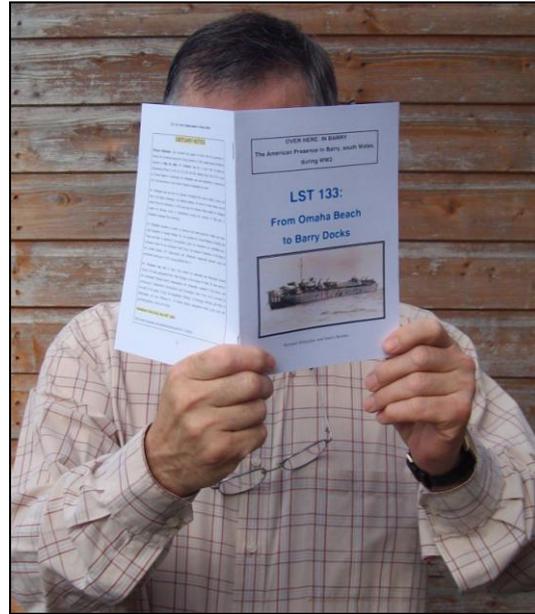
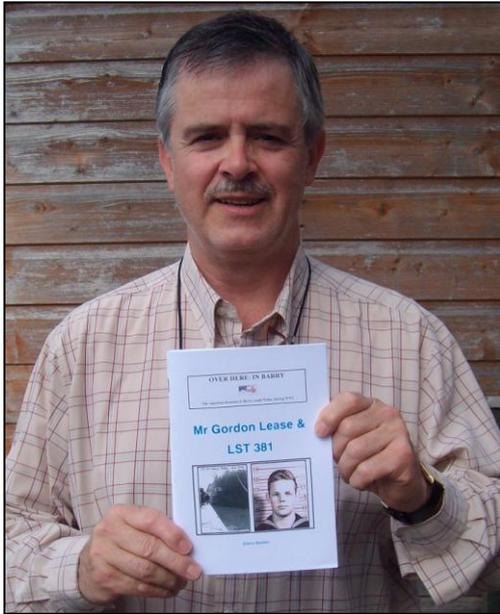
The wedding took place on Tuesday of last week at Merthyr Dyfan Church, Barry, between **Miss Elizabeth Hollinshead**, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs A Hollinshead, Hinchscliff Avenue, Barry, and **Private Willie A White**, US Army, third son of Mr and Mrs T R White, Porterville, California...The best man was **Lieutenant W Peacock**, US Army.

Thursday November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1955  
**HOME FROM CALIFORNIA**

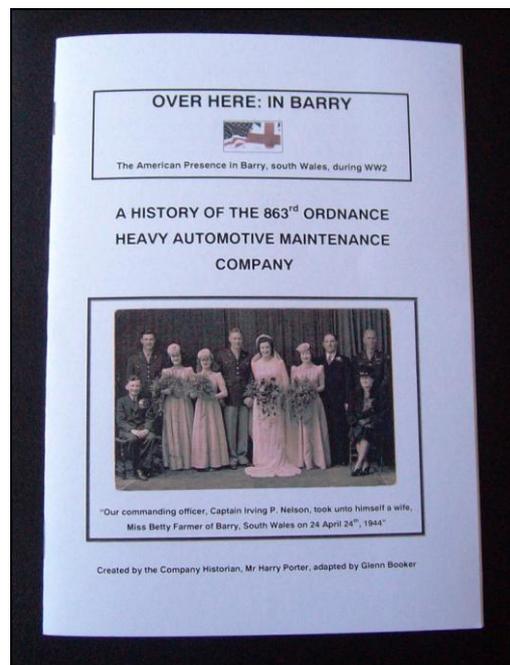
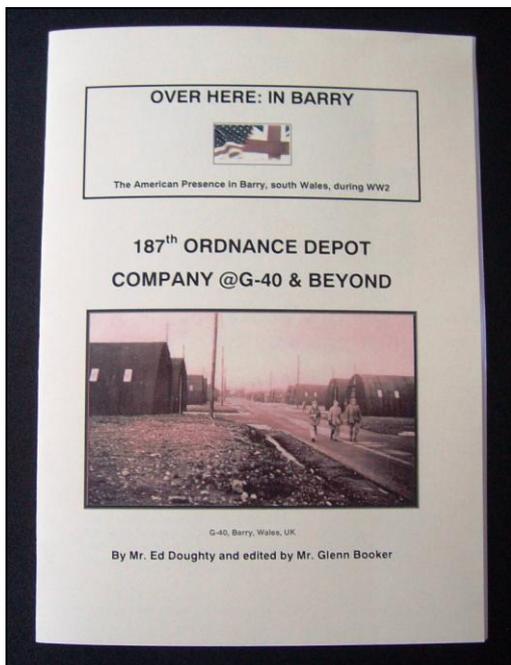
Nearly ten years ago, **Mrs Elizabeth May White (formerly Hollinshead)** of 74, Hinchscliff Avenue, Barry, left her family and friends to join her American husband, Mr William White, a carpenter, in California. On Wednesday week Mrs White was once again happily re-united with her relatives when the Queen Elizabeth docked in Southampton. With her on a few month's visit to this country is her husband, now in the trucking business (transport trailers) and their two children, **Valerie June, aged 8 years, and William Edward, aged 6 years.**

A welcome home party was given for the children at 2 Dyfan Avenue, the home of Mr and Mrs Edward Hollinshead, on Friday, when relatives rallied around to entertain their 20 young guests.... "It is good to be home," said Mrs White," and my husband loves it over here."

Now for some advertisements:



I have begun to print what I hope will be a series of booklets **“OVER HERE IN BARRY: The American Presence in Barry, south Wales, during WW2.”** These are for sale priced at £1, £1.25, £1.50 depending on how many pages are therein. There could be a *little* postage if you live beyond the confines of Barry & Penarth. There WILL be a *lot* of postage, relatively speaking, if you wish me to send them overseas. **BUT** if you are happy and able to receive them via email as attachments there is **NO charge** at all! The two booklets above relate to two **LST’s (Landing Ship, Tank)** that put into Barry Docks for repairs. Below: 187<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Depot Company and 863<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance Heavy Automotive Company, both were @ G-40.



## M'S JOURNEY TO NEW HOME via SHIP & TRAIN

Last month we read about "M" and how her mother did not want (initially) any Americans in her home; this situation changed when her daughter fell in love with one and eventually in 1945 married him: **Bill**. He then returned to duty on the continent.

When the war was over Uncle Sam transported **Bill** back to North Carolina to be demobbed, leaving "M" and a friend to make the transatlantic journey in the company of many other GI Brides. She recalls it took: "seventeen days to get there on a Liberty ship... we were with hundreds of GIs and hundreds of American WAAC's. We had to be kept separate. We were given one deck to stay on as there were so many of us...I was with another war bride from Barry. She had married an American Indian."

### STATESSIDE

When they reached New York those girls who were going further had to stay on the ship to be processed. "A few girls who got there and they weren't wanted.... That's as far as they got," Maud recollects. When she arrived in **New York** the Red Cross contacted Bill to say she had arrived she was put a train for **Chicago**.

### BILL MISSES "M"— WELL, ALMOST

On arriving at the station in Chicago **Bill** was the first man to move. '**M**' remembered: "He leaped the fence and oh, it was funny because one girl with me had twins, little ones, and so she was carrying one and I was carrying the other one and I got off the train and I saw this man running, but now I'd only ever seen my husband in ... full uniform and here was this guy running towards me and he had on, I think, black trousers and white shirt ... it was warm, it was very warm. It was August, I think... And he was running and as he ran he looked at me and ran past me. I stood there with this baby and I said to the girl. "**I think that was my husband.**" I called "Bill!" and he turned around... We [had] had a girl in our room and she [had] said that she was a hairdresser... All of us had long hair, real long hair... And it was so hot. It was killing us...And I let her cut my hair off...That's what he didn't recognise me..."What have you done with your hair?" he asked."

**NICELY PRINTED @COPY-IT, HOLTON ROAD, BARRY**