

A WWI Romance

From Brest, France to St. Florian, Alabama

Marie Louise Aimie Yvonne Herrou

& Edward John “Bud” Rasch, Jr.

Marie Herrou was born in November 1901 in the port city of Brest to Louis and Marie LeGleau Herrou. She was baptized in St. Louis Catholic Church in Brest. Her father, Louis, was a ship's captain in the trade with China. After his death in 1913, her mother operated a combined news stand, book store, and tobacco shop to support the family. Marie attended high school, helped run the shop, and took piano lessons. She received the equivalent of a high school diploma at age 15.

About 1917, Marie met Bud Rasch at the shop, when he stopped by on his sidecar equipped motorcycle. He had been stationed in Brest with the Quartermaster Corps of the American Expeditionary Forces. Although Marie had learned English in school, her mother did not allow her to speak the language to Americans. That was considered too “forward”.

Bud studied the French language at a convent in Brest. It is unknown if that was before or after he met Marie. He stated in a letter home that he nearly dislocated his tongue trying to pronounce some of the jaw-breaking French words.

Interestingly, he also stated in a letter dated December 1918 that neither the French wines or the French mademoiselles held any charm for him.

Bud and Marie became engaged, but her family initially would not allow them to marry. She was only 17 years old and Bud was 17 years older than she. Also, it is said that Bud had proudly shown his future mother-in-law a couple of photographs of his sister, Julia, and her sons. Julia's husband, Frank Buffler, was not included in any of the photos. Marie's mother suspected that the family was Bud's.

After the war, Bud returned to the U.S. and was discharged from the Army in January 1920. He returned to France and

married Marie in October 1920. They were married in a civil ceremony, as required by law and, an hour later, at a nuptial Mass in St. Louis of Brest Church.

Bud and Marie lived in Paris and other areas of France for two years, where he worked for the American Graves Registration Service. In May 1922 they moved to the U.S. and made their home in what Bud had earlier described, in a letter from France, as “Heavenly St. Florian”. There, they operated a large farm.

Marie returned to school at Florence State College in Florence, Alabama, studying chemistry. She then worked at the Phosphate, Carbide, and the General Analytical Labs of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. She worked to help support the farm (which struggled during the depression years) and educate the family. Bud and Marie raised five children in St. Florian.