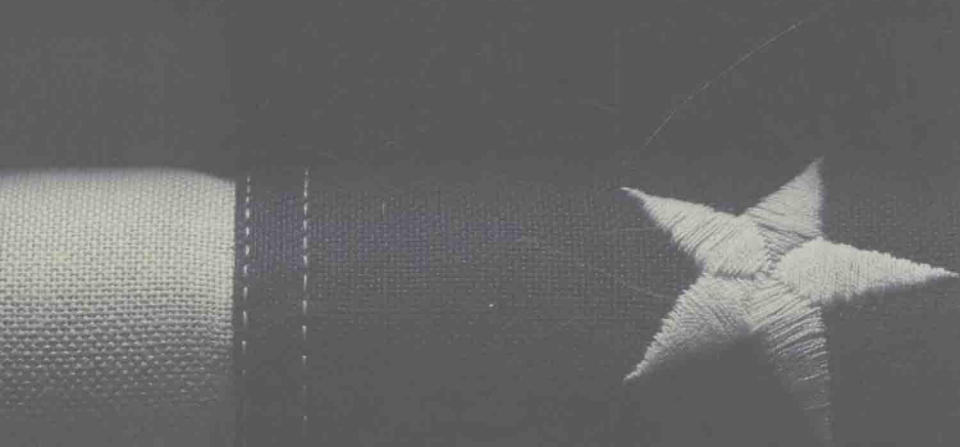


SAFELY REST

In October 1947, an eerie silence greeted the flag-draped coffin of a fallen WWII soldier as it moved up New York's Fifth Avenue. There was no confetti or ticker tape, and many in the crowd openly wept. America was bringing the first of its dead sons home...

DAVID P. COLLEY



SAFELY REST



DAVID P. COLLEY



Most Berkley Books are available at special quantity discounts for bulk purchases for sales promotions, premiums, fund-raising, or educational use. Special books, or book excerpts, can also be created to fit specific needs.

For details, write: Special Markets, The Berkley Publishing Group, 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014.

A Caliber Book

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Group (Canada), 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4V 3B2, Canada

(a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Group Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.)

Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia

(a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.)

Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi—110 017, India

Penguin Group (NZ), Cnr. Airborne and Rosedale Roads, Albany, Auckland 1310, New Zealand

(a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)

Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd., Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

This book is an original publication of The Berkley Publishing Group.

Copyright © 2004 by David P. Colley

Text design by Tiffany Estreicher

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions.

Caliber is a registered trademark of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

The "C" design is a trademark belonging to Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

First edition: November 2004

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Colley, David.

Safely rest / by David P. Colley.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-425-19835-9

I. World War, 1939-1945—Repatriation of war dead—United States. I. Title.

D810.D4C63 2004

940.54'6—dc22

2004045691

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Mary Liz
And to Pad, Chris, Erin, and Jack
For all their wonderful support and love

Acknowledgments

My thanks for this book must first go to my agent, Richard Curtis, and my wife, Mary Liz, for their inspiration and support for *Safely Rest*. Richard recognized the merit in the story of the return and final disposition of America's dead from WWII. It had never been related before, and Richard saw its force if told through the eyes of those who experienced loss in the war. And it was through Mary Liz's many readings of drafts and her insightful suggestions that the book improved immeasurably. She edited and managed to plod through at least six works in progress.

Red Franks provided the power and poignancy to this story. I have never forgotten his photograph that appeared in 1966 in the second volume of the *American Heritage History of World War II*. Red epitomized the strength of the American citizen soldier of World War II with his steady, determined gaze. There were millions like him, and they won the war.

Instinctively I turned to Red when I began the book, but I never imagined

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

the depth of his story and that of his father, Dr. Jesse Dee Franks. It unfolded in its many dimensions.

Red Franks hailed from Columbus, Mississippi, and so many of the citizens of that wonderful town were of invaluable help in my research for *Safely Rest*. Foremost was Mrs. Fran Fuqua, member and historian at the First Baptist Church. Fran was indefatigable in uncovering material from Dr. Franks's years at the church from 1921 through 1947 and in introducing me to many Columbians who knew both Dr. Franks and Red. She and her husband Bob extended their hospitality and that of the church on our visit to Mississippi.

I also owe so much to Nancy Lee Franks Goodall of Gallatin, Tennessee, Red Franks's sister, who related the life of the Franks family in Columbus in the years they lived there, particularly during the war. Nancy indulged me for many hours on the phone and in person and introduced me to her friends in Columbus.

Dawn Furr Garakaris, daughter of Dottie Turner, Red's fiancée, also shared many thoughts and memories of her mother.

Bernie Imes, editor of the *Columbus Commercial Dispatch*, ran a story in the newspaper reporting that I was working on the book and asking any Columbians who remembered Red and his father to come forward. Through these contacts I developed a network of old friends of Red and Dr. Franks. Among them was Mrs. Chebie Bateman, director of the library in Columbus, who sent me material from the archives. Wanda Sumner, local history librarian, and Russell James, archivist, provided me with historical information.

There were many friends of Red Franks whom I interviewed, among them Jake Propst, Howard and Riley Noland, Shield Sims, Dick Burts, Herbert Gabhart, J. W. Fagan, and Nannie Kate Smith.

Those who helped are not limited to Columbus. A number of people from Pontotoc, Mississippi, who remember Red and Dottie Turner, passed on memories to me: the Anderson sisters, Julia Holmes, Eleanor Rayburn, Genevieve Yancey, and Sarah Gillespie. Sarah and David Naugher invited us into their home and related their personal experiences with loss in WWII. Old classmates and friends of Dottie's, including the writer Elizabeth Spencer, shared their memories with me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Col. Walter Stuart, retired in Benjamin, Utah gave me valuable information about the Ploëști raid and recounted the battle as he flew on *Euroclydon's* wing. So too did retired Gen. Jacob Smart, who planned the Ploëști raid.

The staff at the Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii (CILHI) in Honolulu assembled in an interview at Hickham AFB to fill me in on the workings of the organization that searches for America's missing war dead. Among the staff that spoke to me were Col. Paul A. Bethke, commander, CILHI, Johnnie Webb, senior advisor at JPAC (Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command), Ginger Couden, public affairs specialist with JPAC, and Sgt. Sebastian Harris. Brian Moon also provided information about the search for the missing from WWII.

Ellie Pope Dodwell related the trauma of her brother's death in Normandy. Alita Howard spoke of her communications with her late husband Cory, shot down and killed over Germany, and Brenda Scalf Birchfield told of her search for her father. I owe much to Jack Davis of Easton, Pennsylvania, a highly decorated combat medic who served with the 5th Division in Europe, and to Dr. John A. Kerner who took time for a lengthy interview about his days as a combat medic during the war. He tells his story in the book *Combat Medic World War II*. Col. Wallace Hale offered his personal memoir, *Battle Rattle*, about his experience as a division chaplain in WWII. Dick Austin also gave permission to quote extensively from the book *Letters From the Pacific, A Combat Chaplain in World War II*.

Darrell C. Richardson of Memphis, Tennessee, a friend, summer camp mate, and Baptist seminary classmate of Red Franks provided information and photographs of Red as a boy and as a young man. Lt. Col. Deborah Skillman, assistant chief, Mortuary Affairs, and Casualty Support Division, Department of the Army, went to great lengths to obtain Red Franks's military file. Karen Warner Pearce gave permission to use Jack Warner's photograph of the crew assembled in front of the B-24 *Euroclydon the Storm* taken a few days before the battle of Ploëști, along with excerpts of several of her father's letters. John F. Kane and his wife Donna gave permission to use quotations from Col. John R. Kane's papers. Williams College gave permission to quote from the war memoirs of Irving Fish, Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

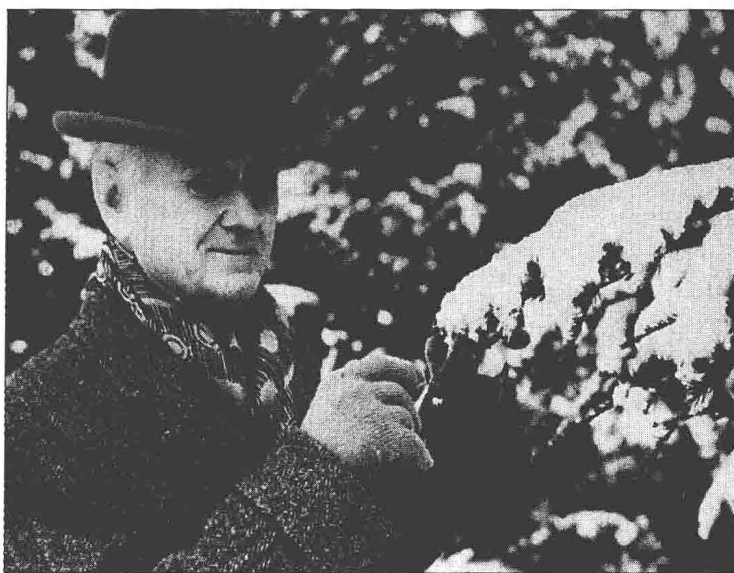
Thanks also to the Easton Area Public Library and Mrs. Dottie Patoki who retrieved numerous books through interlibrary loan, and the Skillman Library of Lafayette College.

Finally, thanks to my editor, Tom Colgan, for his insight and support, and to Leslie Curtis, Richard Curtis's wife, for her enthusiasm for the manuscript and for suggesting the title, *Safely Rest*.



Second Lieutenant Jesse D. Franks, Jr. in late 1942, just prior to assignment overseas with the 8th Air Force in England.

(courtesy of Nancy Lee Goodall)



Dr. Franks, wearing his customary Homburg, in Switzerland, 1948.

(courtesy of Nancy Lee Goodall)



Portrait of the Franks family —Red, Dr. Franks and Sallie—
around 1923 on the steps of the First Baptist Church parsonage,
Columbus, Mississippi.

(courtesy of First Baptist Church)



Red as bugler at Camp Ridgecrest at age 14, 10 years before Ploesti.
He sounded Taps every night at bedtime.

(courtesy of Darrell Richardson)



Red playing his favorite game, football, at Ridgecrest
in 1939. Red is the quarterback.

(courtesy of Darrell Richardson)



Red Franks, at right, with high school
buddies in Columbus in 1937.

(courtesy of Nancy Lee Goodall)



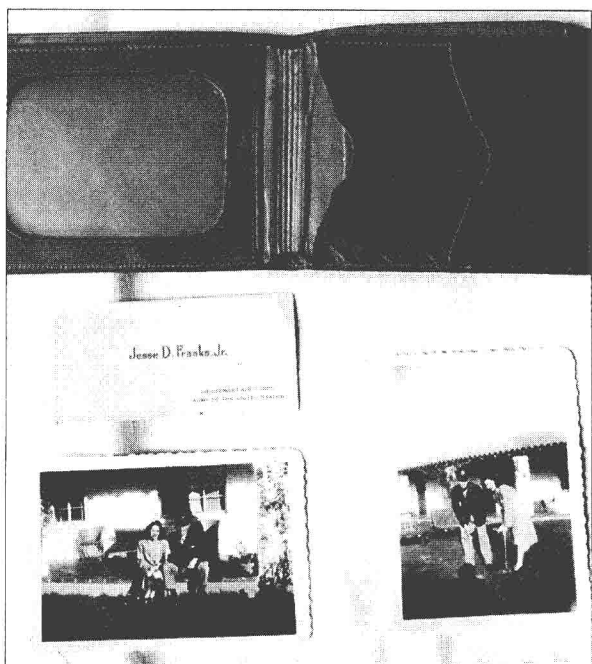
Dr. Franks and his second wife Augusta at the celebration of his
25th year as pastor of the First Baptist Church
(courtesy of First Baptist Church)



Portrait of Dottie Turner circa 1941
(courtesy of Dawn Gerakaris)

Red's wallet contained his calling card as well as two pictures of Red and Dottie. The photos were taken three months before Red went overseas and were in his wallet when he bailed out over Ploetsti. The wallet and its contents made its way back, through the years, to Nancy Lee Goodall, who gave it to the author. The photo is a typical WWII photo of young lovers made poignant by separation and loss.

(courtesy of the author)



DEDICATED TO
Everybody on duty for God and country

PRESENTED TO

Name St. J. Franks, Jr. P-37444
 Home Address Columbus, Miss.
 Home Church FIRST BAPTIST
 Pastor Dr. Franks, Sr.

CONTENTS

PART	PAGE
One: In Training	3
Two: On Duty	18
Three: For Morale	23
Four: Bugle Notes	33
Five: Victory Songs	38

ON TO VICTORY, prepared by Hight C Moore, is published by the Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, T. L. Holcomb, Executive Secretary

Copyright 1943, Broadman Press

On To Victory

"Quit You Like Men"

"War a Good Warfare"

Thought you
 would enjoy this little
 pamphlet.
 Love
 Dad

1943
 BROADMAN PRESS
 Nashville, Tennessee

A booklet of prayers sent by Dr. Franks to Red in North Africa shortly before the Ploesti attack.

(courtesy of Nancy Lee Goodall)

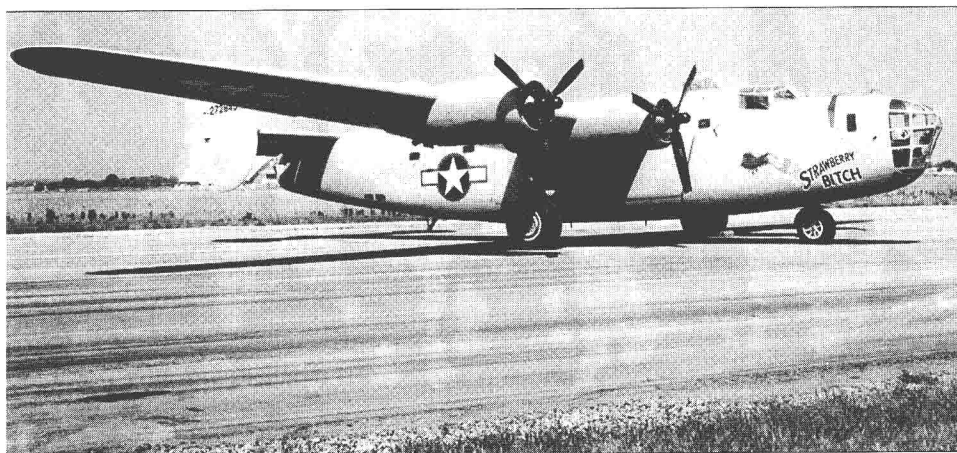


Photo of the B-24D Strawberry Bitch, similar to Euroclydon. Strawberry Bitch was assigned to the 376th BG, the Liberandos and flew out of Africa. She is painted the putty color, desert camouflage, of the planes that were stationed there. The photo clearly shows the greenhouse where the bombardier sat. Strawberry Bitch is on display at the U.S. Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

(courtesy of United States Air Force Museum)



The crew of Euroclydon in the Libyan desert just days from the Ploesti mission. Red Franks is 4th from left, kneeling in front row, wearing his officer's cap. Lt. Jack Warner is 3rd from left, front row, without a shirt.

(courtesy of Karen Warner Pearce)

Contents

<i>Prologue</i>	I
1. Target Ploești	7
2. As Ready as I'll Ever Be	22
3. Just One More Day	35
4. Remembering Sallie	50
5. Sweetest Girl in the World	59
6. Hell's Dominion	69
7. Regret to Inform You	83
8. Hope from Benghazi	91
9. Dad, Please Stay the Same	99
10. The Gold Star	107
11. Christmas without Red	123