

La voix du Nord

## Saint-Amand-Les Eaux: the Family of Private Kennedy will be gathering at his Memorial this Wednesday

Published 24/08/2015

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On Wednesday, Alain Bocquet will be welcoming the Kennedy family (no relation to the former American president) to the good city of Saint-Amand. The Americans are coming to gather at the tomb of their relative, Malcolm Kennedy, who was killed on September 2nd, 1944, during the Liberation of Saint-Amand.



"This visit wouldn't have been possible without the Internet." On August 18th, Alain Bocquet received an email from a professor from Antwerp, Mrs. Owens, on behalf of Jody Kennedy Axelson, the sister of Malcolm Kennedy, the American soldier killed in combat during the Liberation of Saint-Amand in early September, 1944. "In 2012, the Kennedy family was stunned by their discovery of a tourist photo on the Internet: a photo of the stele in honor of Malcolm Kennedy, built in 2004, and dedicated on September 2nd, 2004, during the ceremony commemorating the Liberation of the city. They had not known of its existence before this chance discovery," said Alain Bocquet. Since then, the sister of the American soldier who gave his life for France has had only one wish: to visit the monument memorializing her brother and to see the place where he died.

## **Visit to the City**

Her dearest wish is about to be fulfilled. Wednesday, a delegation of the Kennedy family will be personally welcomed to Saint-Amand by the mayor and by former combattants. Jody Kennedy Axelson, the sister of Malcolm Kennedy; Carol Beatty, the daughter of Jody Axelson and Malcolm Kennedy's neice; Elizabeth Beatty-Owens, the granddaughter of Jody Axelson; Cynthia Owens, the sister-in-law of Carol Beatty, and Jane Ross Owens, a Belgian friend of the Kennedy family, will first be welcomed at the *échevinage* (historic city hall) by the deputy mayor of the city. In the late morning, they will go to lay a wreath at the foot of the memorial built for the GI at the foot of the Moulin Blanc bridge. They will then share a lunch together in a restaurant in the town center, followed by a guided tour of the city, with special visit to the city's History Museum. "We wanted to go all out to welcome them," remarked Alain Bocquet.

## **Saint-Amand remembers**

Saint-Amand is a city where remembrance is not taken lightly. Alain Bocquet is currently planning to open a museum in memory of Louise de Bettignies to honor the life of this member of the Resistance, and all the women who fought for freedom. Several monuments to memorialize the combattants have already been built in this city, known for its thermal springs. "In every speech for Liberation Day, I recite the names of many of the people who saved Saint-Amand, and for some of them, there was no designated gathering place," observed Alain Bocquet. Accordingly, a plaque was installed at 41, Grand Place in memory of Maurice Carton and Fernand Deltombe, printers of the underground "The Voice of the North" (our photo) along with other plaques on the rue des Anges, and at the former Tax Office. "In the woods of Flines-les-Mortagne, we have also placed a plaque for an Algerian member of the Resistance," testified Alain Bocquet .

For Malcolm Kennedy, killed in Saint-Amand, but buried in the United States, putting up a plaque was not possible. So, the mayor decided to build a stele where he fell, at the foot of the Moulin Blanc bridge. The black granite stele, supporting an American soldiers' helmet, is the work of Michel Kaprowicz. It was dedicated on September 2nd, 2004 in the presence of the artist, former combattants, and the American Consul of the period, Richard Huckaby.

## **Two Residents of Saint-Amand remember the Liberation**

One resident was 12 years old the day of the Liberation of Saint-Amand, September 2nd, 1944. "When the Americans entered Saint-Amand, I had taken shelter in a cellar to avoid the fallout from the battle in the street. In the cellar, we heard the noise, and when we came out, we saw a scene of devastation," she recalled. It was here she saw the lifeless body of Private Malcolm Kennedy: "It was a great sorrow seeing this dead soldier as he had come to defend us, and at the same time there was joy. The joy of being liberated, free. I was so happy after four years of occupation and hardship."

Mrs. Bernard Béal was also there, taking refuge in a cellar with her family. She was 15 years old at the time. When the fighting was finished, they came out: "I saw the stretcher with Malcolm just across from our house. My mother, my brother and sister, and I all said prayers for him. My mother closed his eyes." She remembers the soldier to this day: " He was a tall redhead with blue eyes. It made such a strong impression on me." Recalling this memory of the death of the American soldier, who was, in all likelihood killed by fire from the French Forces of the Interior, she began to sob: " Just talking about it is overwhelming. This brings back so many memories." Wednesday, she will be there to bear witness, and to remember Private Kennedy.