

## SUSIE'S STORY

In June of 1944, Poole, England was home to Vince Signorelli, better known to his shipmates, and a 10 year-old local girl named Susie Dyeft, as "Cookie". Mr. Signorelli had been assigned as a cook to USCG 49 earlier that year. This vessel was one of the sixty eighty-three foot wooden-hulled patrol boats that comprised Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One. Many of these boats were stationed in Poole that year, awaiting the message that would launch them into history.

May of that same year, little Susie could be found playing with classmates down at the quay where the Coast Guard patrol boats were moored. Eventually, out of curiosity, the children were drawn to the patrol boats and were befriended by some of the crewmembers. "Cookie" greeted the children with a warm smile, and usually some homemade cookies or sweets. Soon, Cookie and Susie became good friends visiting with each other almost daily at the quay. Then, in early June, the word finally came - "Operation Overlord" had commenced and the Rescue Flotilla had to leave.

Susie was sad to see her new friend leave, but before he left, she gave him a signed photograph. Summer of 1944 was the last time they would ever see each other. The war soon ended and they both survived. Cookie went back to the States. Susie remained in Poole. Cookie had kept the picture of the little girl from Poole and, many years later, as he was finalizing his plans to return to Poole for the 50th anniversary of the invasion, he decided to try to locate his friend Susie.

Mr. Signorelli began his search by contacting friends across the United States, who eventually placed him in contact with another native of Poole, Mrs. Mair Beamish. He explained to her all he knew about Susie was her first name and that she was a resident of Poole in 1944, and that he had a photograph of what she looked like back in 1944. Not much to work with, but determined to help, Mrs. Beamish ran the photo and a small article in the Poole "Evening Echo". It wasn't long before phone calls flooded in with information about the little girl. "I can't believe it!" a stunned Susie remarked, "To think he remembered me and kept that photo all these years! I'm flattered to say the least!"



The two friends were reunited on 02 June, 1994, almost fifty years to the day since they had last set eyes on one another. The tearful reunion took place at a reception hosted by Mrs. Beamish for the Coast Guard Rescue Flotilla One veterans and USCGC Dallas crewmembers. Later that evening, the rest of the Dallas crew got a chance to meet Susie and Cookie, as well as the other veterans, at a reception held on Dallas.

