

# Paisley Family Research and News

## The Army YMCA in World War I

James Percy Paisley was born February 2, 1881 in Gibsonville, NC. to John Wharton Paisley and Bessie Cannon Paisley. By 1905 James was a senior at Davidson College (Davidson, NC). In the yearbook he was listed as 24 years old, 6 foot and 176 pounds. James left North Carolina some time between 1905 and 1910. In 1910 he was single and boarding in a house in Paris, Lamar County, Texas. Shortly thereafter James married Lola Faye Mallory.

In 1918 James filled out his War draft registration card at age 37. His youngest brother John was fighting in France but was killed on June 21, 1918. Twenty-two days later James applied for a passport application to go to Great Britain and France and work with the Army YMCA.

Did James know his brother had been killed at the time he applied for a passport? How soon was James able to get to France? Did James visit his brother's grave in Belleau?

There are no answers to these questions at this time but we do know that James did go to France. He was a secretary for the National War Work Council of the YMCA. On his passport application he stated he was going to stay in France until the war was over. The passport was signed and dated by James on July 13, 1918. There was an official ink stamp of August 1918. The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, but the YMCA continued to stay and help with repatriation of the soldiers and sailors. On July 19, 1919, immigration records show that James returned to the United States, leaving from the port of Brest, France on board the Zeppelin. He arrived in New York on July 29th.

James returned to Lamar County, Texas and was listed with his wife in the 1920 census. The 1930 census shows James and Lola living with her brother-in-law William L. Jones. There are no children listed, but an ancestry.com family tree says there was a daughter.

On May 16, 1957, James Percy Paisley died in Gregg County, Texas. His wife died eight years later.

What exactly was the YMCA doing in Europe during World War I? Although unable to find James' motivation for joining the Army YMCA, much information about the YMCA's involvement in the "Great War" was found.

The YMCA's involvement in helping servicemen began during the Civil War. They built battlefield canteens and operated kitchens in hospitals, built chapels,

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Annual dues are \$5.00. Make checks payable to Rovena Jones and note in the message area "Paisley Family Association."

### Treasurer's Report

Beginning balance	
March 7, 2009	\$149.60
Dues collected	165.00
DNA donation	<u>145.00</u>
Total	459.60
Expenses	
DNA testing	145.00
Newsletter printing	60.86
Postage	41.12
Paisley Family Society	<u>27.00</u>
Total expenses	273.98
Total Balance reported	
March 6, 2010	185.62

taught men how to read and write, and maintained hotels for soldiers on furlough, providing free meals.

After the Civil War, the YMCA continued its military work. They established the first recreational, sports and counseling services for soldiers and sailors. In 1889, the YMCA established its first permanent Army YMCA at Fort Monroe, Virginia. They continued to help the military in The Spanish-American War and traveled abroad to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The YMCA was able to get supplies to these areas before the army did. For the next decade the YMCA developed the knowledge and expertise at setting up mobile buildings and equipment sites.

When the U.S. entered the Great War in 1917, the YMCA was ready to launch massive programs in support of the military. They offered their support to President Woodrow Wilson and he accepted. The YMCA started projects that later became a permanent part of the military: overseas entertainment for the troops, exchanges, educational scholarships for veterans, and rest and recreation facilities for the battle-weary.

Some of the work of the YMCA during WW I -

- Operated 26 R&R leave centers in France
- Built 4000 huts and tents for recreation and religious services
- Mobilized 1470 entertainers to perform for the troops overseas
- Operated 1500 canteens and post exchanges
- Ran 44 factories in Europe for the production of cookies and candy for the troops
- Humanitarian services for more than 5 million prisoners of war on both sides
- Issued 80,000 educational scholarships to veterans
- Designed and built the Pershing Stadium in Paris to stage athletic contests

The YMCA had 26,000 paid staff during the war and over 5,000 volunteers. They worked as secretaries, athletic directors, entertainers, truck drivers, librarians, hotel managers, factory managers, and preachers. They provided writing paper and postage stamps, gave advice, listened, and provided information as needed. Secretaries carried stretchers and provided food, chocolate, and

coffee to men in the trenches. James Paisley served as a secretary and he made it home safely. But, there were 286 causalities among the YMCA personnel.

The YMCA continued its work in WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. It moved its Armed Services Department headquarters to Washington DC in 1986 to have better access to military leaders. Today the YMCA continues to provide human support services for military personnel and their families throughout the world.

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U.S. *Federal Census*. 1900 Guilford Co. NC; 1910 Lamar Co. TX; 1920 Lamar Co. TX; 1930 Lamar Co. TX.

United States of America. *Passport Applications*. "Jam. P. Paisley" 13 July 1918, Lamar, Texas

United States of America. *World War I Draft Cards*. "James Percy Paisley," Ser. #1354, Order #610.

## Zeppelin Travel

A note from the editor:

James Percy Paisley traveled in 1919 from Brest, France to New York in a **zeppelin!** How cool is that? The immigration records showed that James arrived in a ship named "Zeppelin." At first, it was though that the word was being used generically. Rigid-skinned air ships or dirigibles had picked up the name of "Zeppelin" after Ferdinand von Zeppelin, a German count who designed the first rigid-skinned air ship in 1893.

Research into the use of zeppelins lead to an article from the June 18, 1919 edition of the *New York Times*. On June 17th at 4:00 pm, the American transport *Zeppelin* sailed for the U.S. from the port of Brest, France, commanded by John H. Towers, head of the American naval seaplane expedition. The transport *Mobile* left soon after the *Zeppelin*; the two ships carrying home 10,000 troops of the 7th Division and the Service of Supply.

So, the term "Zeppelin" was not being used generically on the immigration records. One of the U.S. airships was called "Zeppelin." Just one month after the *New York Times* article, the *Zeppelin* was back in France and heading home with another group of Americans, including James Percy Paisley.

## The Life of Melvyn Paisley

Melvyn Paisley lived a life of extreme highs and lows. From a hungry boyhood during the Great Depression to flying fighter planes during WWII; from a position as Assistant Secretary of the Navy to four years in prison for taking bribes; Mel Paisley lived an extraordinary (yet at times a typical) American life.

Melvyn Robert Paisley was born October 9, 1924 in Portland, Oregon to illegal Canadian immigrants. His father Frank Paisley (born November 6, 1901 Ontario, Canada) and his mother Clara Vermeulen Paisley (born 1900 in Belgium, immigrated to Saskatchewan in 1907) were married in Regina in 1922. They moved to Vancouver, which is where their first son Howard Gordan was born. Frank got a job as a mechanic on a ship, but jumped ship in Seattle, Washington. He made his way to Oregon and took up the life of a lumberjack. Clara and Gordan came across the border without any papers and joined Frank. So by chance, their second son Melvyn was born an U.S. citizen.

In the 1930 census, Frank, Clara, and Gordon listed themselves as having been born in Montana. Years later Mel reported that his mother was anxious about having entered the country illegally and was greatly relieved when President Franklin Roosevelt signed a bill to allow illegal immigrants to automatically become citizens if they could prove when they entered the U.S.

The Paisley family moved a lot. Frank went where there was work and the family followed, often getting jobs themselves to help out in the depression before "The Depression." Mel was curious and bright and got into lots of mischief. He was interested in building soapbox derby cars and eventually street hot rods.

Frank's father, Albert Paisley, died in Ontario Canada leaving Frank \$500. [Mel's autobiography reports the date as 1936. Family web sites report the death as 1925. Maybe the will couldn't be settled until Albert's second wife died in 1933.] This windfall allowed Frank Paisley to own his first house. Times were tough, but the Paisleys were living the American dream.

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. This had a sobering effect on the country, but not so much on Mel. He was in high school and was more interested in building and racing hot rods. But, three things happened to Mel that changed his focus. Mel spent a night in jail for speeding and racing his hot rod. After being released, Mel saw a movie about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. And finally, he heard an inspiring speech from a Major in the Marine Corp.

Mel felt the call to help his country. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps Cadet Program on Aug. 14, 1942. He was called to duty before his senior year was finished. Mel's book *Ace! Autobiography of a Fighter Pilot WWII* (1992) gives a fascinating look at the excruciating training men had to go through to become soldiers and pilots. It took a lot of brave and brash young men (with no clue about the horrors of war) to make an extraordinary U.S. fighting force.

Mel made the cut and was finally selected to train as a fighter pilot. He got his wings and was placed in the 366th Fighter Group which provided air and ground

support while flying the P-47 "Jugs." Mel flew 172 combat sorties in France and Belgium. He received the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, the Distinguished Flying Cross, fifteen Oak leaf Cluster Air Medals, and the Belgium Four-rangere. All this before he turned 21.

Leave time in the army consisted of drinking and women. Mel continued this habit after the war ended. He still had a lot of growing up to do and was at loose ends. He continued with his hot rod building, tried to study to be a CPA, bought a bar, sold it, and bought a boat with friends and tried to sail around the world. And, he married Genevieve because everyone else seemed to be getting married. [The marriage didn't last but Mel got a great family from it.]

Mel finally moved to Chicago and attended the American Institute of Technology. He got his engineering degree in 1953 and was accepted into MIT. He didn't like it there, so he left and took a job with Boeing Corporation. [Several sources said Mel graduated with a Masters Degree from MIT, but Mel says in his autobiography that he did not graduate.]

In 1954 Mel was part of the group that designed and tested the BOMARC missile. In 1959 he was manager of the electronics staff for the Minuteman missile system. In 1961 he was named engineering manager in Great Falls and dealt with the engineering aspects of deploying the Minuteman missiles. This job was followed by management of the safeguard anti-ballistic implementation project, followed by B-1 electronics proposal manager. In 1971 Mel was named the 747 Tankers program manager. From there he was named director of planning for Boeing Aerospace Co., before finally becoming the vice president of Boeing International and manager of international operation sales. He was with Boeing for 28 years.

On October 23, 1981 President Ronald Reagan announced his intention to nominate Melvyn R. Paisley to be Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Engineering and Systems. Mel served this post until 1987.

After leaving his federal job, Mel became a consultant to the arms industry working briefly for William Galvin and guiding executives through the government procurement process. In March 1990, William Galvin pleaded guilty to bribery and tax evasion in a Pentagon purchasing fraud scheme. He said he bribed Melvyn Paisley, former Navy Assistant Secretary, and Victor D. Cohen, a former Air Force procurement official, in 1986 and 1987.

On June 14, 1991, Melvyn Paisley admitted to accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes from Navy contractors as well as accepting money from an Israeli manufacturer and providing confidential information to Sperry Corp. He was sentenced to four years in prison and fined \$50,000. Mel joined five corporations and 41 other individuals to be convicted in the 3-year investigation called "Operation III Wind"

Suffering from prostate cancer, Mel could have given up, but upon his release from prison in 1995, he took up painting and collecting WWII films. Mel, a resident of McLean, VA, practically lived in the National Archives digging up "lost" war film footage. After locating "lost film" by John Ford, Mel was mentioned in a *New Yorker*

article which caught the attention of Steven Spielberg.

Spielburg and Richard Schieckel, *Time Magazine* film critic, were producing a documentary about WWII combat photographers. Spielburg and Schieckel hired Mel to be a researcher. When they needed an example of footage to back up a story, Mel successfully found the film for all but two or three stories. With Mel's help, Schieckel accumulated 600 hours of raw WWII film footage.

Schieckel wrote and directed the film with instructions from Spielburg not to "pretty it up." (*Time* June 4, 2000) The results are a gut-wrenching documentary about the war as it really was, as seen through the eyes of the cameraman. *The Shooting War* was narrated by Tom Hanks and Stephen Ambrose. It aired December 7, 2000 on television, having first debuted at the opening of the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans.

Melvyn Robert Paisley died December 19, 2001. Mel was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on the 16th of Jan 2002 in Section 66, site 6693. He was survived by his wife Vicki; and four children from his previous marriage: Deborah, Frank, Melvyn Jr., and Beaumante; also survived by his half-sister Dorothy; and by two grandchildren.

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### **Melvyn Paisley's ancestors as posted on [trees.ancestry.com](http://trees.ancestry.com):**

Frank Paisley b. 1901 Ontario, Can., d. 1971 Portland, Oregon

Albert Edward Paisley, b.1863 Ontario, d.1925 Ontario

Thomas J. Paisley, b.1828 Michigan?; d.1896 Ontario

James B. Paisley, b. 1796 Moharaugh, Ireland, d. 1863 Ontario

James Paisley, b. abt. 1767 Edinburgh, Scotland, d. Canada

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Brinkley, Douglas. "Eyewitnesses to War," *Time*, June 4, 2000. Online at [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,46456,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,46456,00.html)

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*Social Security Death Index* (database online)

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## Paisley Family DNA Project Update

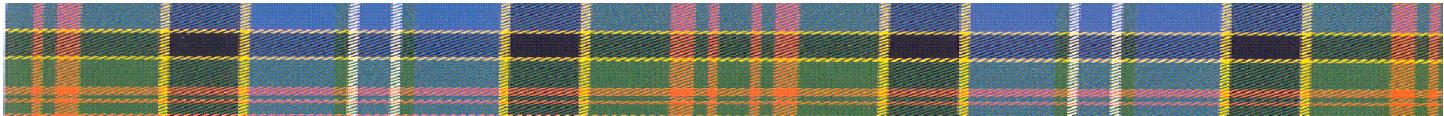
The DNA project now has four participants. Instead of confirming research data, the latest information has us all “scratching our heads.” Where we thought there was a family connection, there is not. Before making any assumptions though, the DNA project needs many, many more participants. Distant cousins (with documented research confirming the family link) need to submit DNA samples to establish a basis of comparison for others with tenuous connections. Any male with the surname of Paisley/Peasley/Pasley will help our cause. Please direct any one you know to this web site: <http://www.familytreedna.com/group-join.aspx?Group=Paisley>

## Graveyards

There is nothing sadder to a family researcher than to have had certain records in the past, but now they don't exist. While in Scotland in 2009 your editor observed that cemeteries around restored castles were in relatively good shape. Cemeteries adjoining old churches in little villages had not fared as well. Stones were often tumbled, broken, or just plain unreadable. This is not just a problem in the United Kingdom. A visit to church cemeteries in Greensboro North Carolina showed the same conditions. One active church has tombstones from the 1700s repaired, replaced, or cleaned on a regular basis. Another church cemetery had let bushes and grass completely cover a sizable portion of the graves.

A perusal of the books, *Tyrone Graveyards Part I* and *Part II* by Eileen Hewson (Kabristan Archives, 2009) shows that the situation is just as bad in Northern Ireland. For a country that is many hundreds of years old, there are very few readable tombstones left. Most of the legible tombstones in the books are dated from the late 1800s or early 1900s. Very few 1700s-era graves are included in the texts.

No one with the surname of Paisley was in *Tyrone Graveyards Part I* or *Part II*. Though there were names familiar to Guilford Co, NC researchers: Hamilton, Moore, Donnell, Finley, Hannah, Kerr, Sloan, White, Young, Carruthers, Rankin, and Shaw.



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## **Next Paisley reunion Saturday, March 5, 2011 Save the Date!**

Hosted by Rovena and Donald Jones  
[donvena@juno.com](mailto:donvena@juno.com)

Tomahawk Ruritan Club  
4101 N. Bailey Bridge Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Homemade Brunswick Stew will be provided.  
Bring a side dish or dessert to share.  
Drinks, cups, plates, and utensils provided.

Plans for an exciting guest speaker are being finalized!