

1 September 2016



“No Greater Honor” – A Service Family Among American Heroes

There are many special monuments, buildings and places around Washington, D.C. Yet, there is only one very special place on a hillside in Arlington, Virginia, that overlooks the heart of our beautiful capital city and reflects all the history and honor of our great Country. On the top of this hill, within the old section of this site, in a hollow on the road connecting two special places, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Lee Mansion, lies generations of a single American family that served our nation over the past 90 years. At the base of the hollow, beside the road, is a tall holly tree planted to honor the service and memory of Major Glenn Miller, U.S. Army Air Corps, and immediately behind this tree are three gravestones uniquely clustered together, marking three generations of the Pedone family.



“The Arlington Hollow” - The Pedone’s Three Grave Sites (Circled)



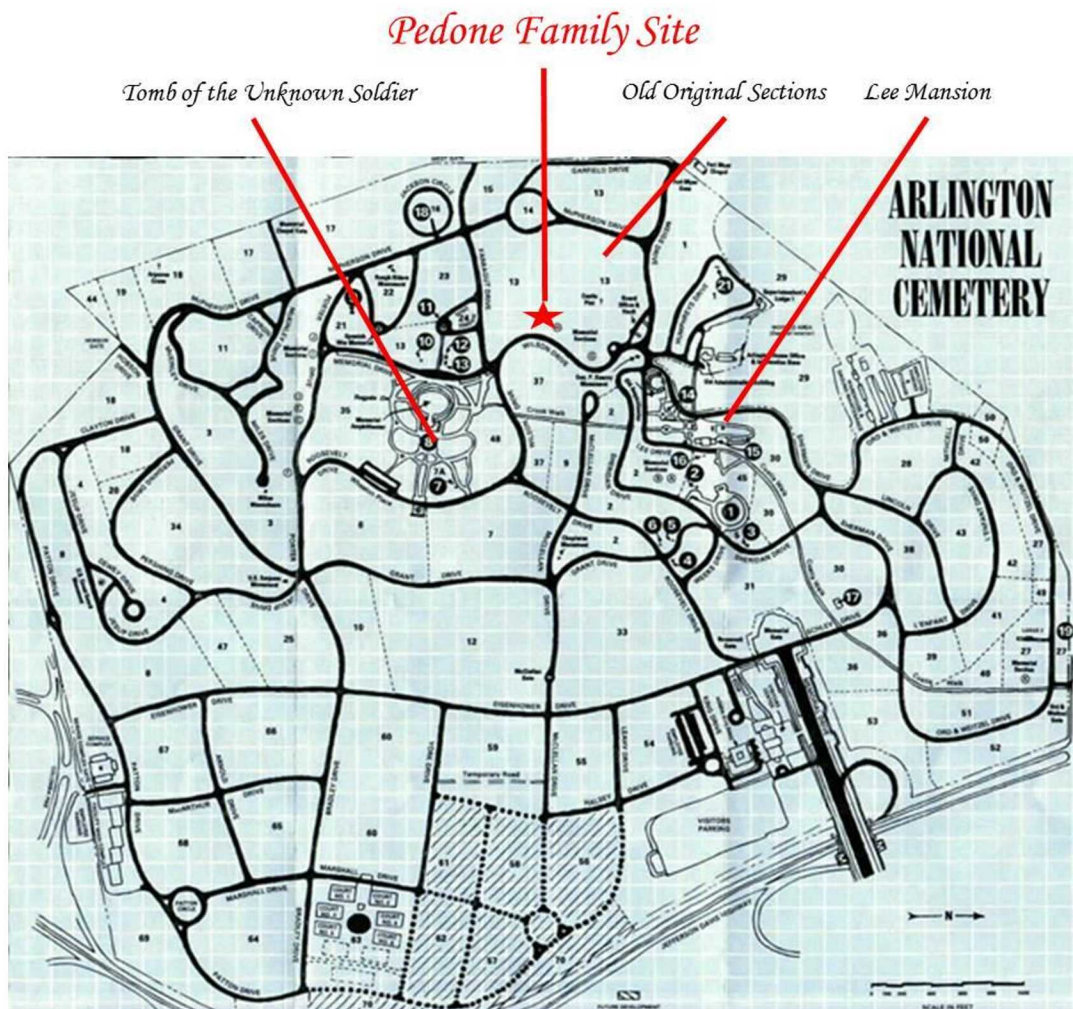
Old Section 13, Arlington National Cemetery



Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



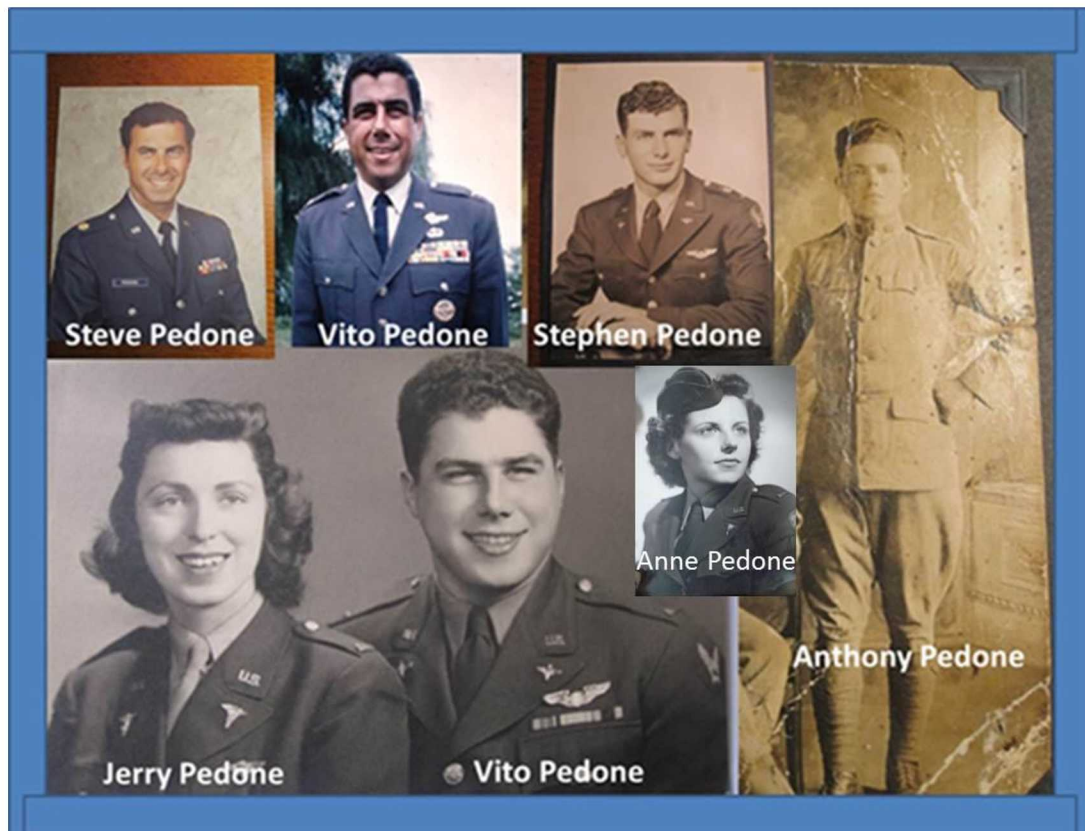
Main Gate & Women's Memorial
& Lee Mansion at top of hill



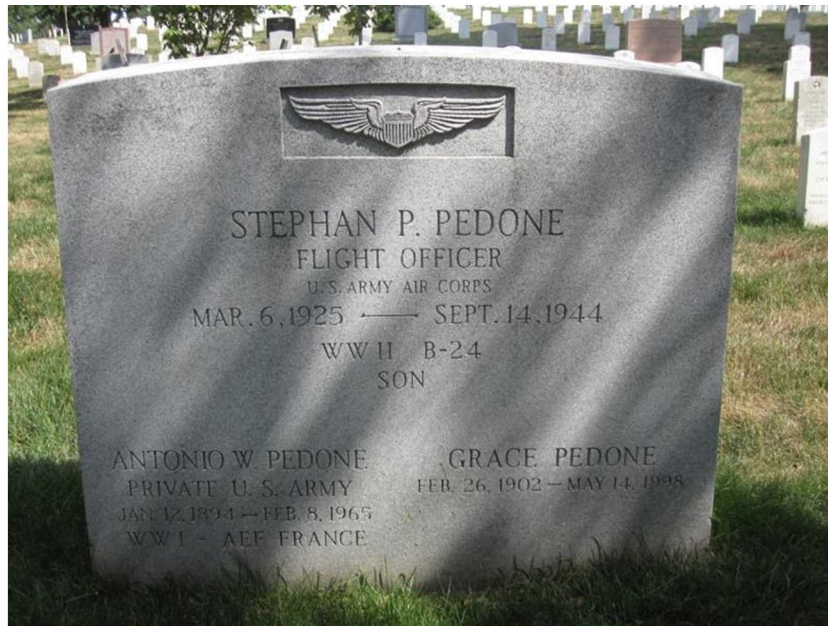
Arlington National Cemetery

This is a twentieth century true American success story that began with a young, uneducated, Italian-speaking, Ellis Island immigrant, from Bari, Italy, coming to America to find freedom and to earn and build a better life. That patriarch was my grandfather, Anthony Pedone. He served in the Pennsylvania National Guard and was first mobilized in 1916 to go into Mexico with General Pershing to chase Pancho Villa. This was called the "Punitive Expedition" and involved the first use of aircraft and motorized vehicles in an Army operation. It has been called the "dry-run" for WWI participation. He was mobilized again in 1917, to become one the first Americans sent to France to become General Pershing's American Expeditionary Force to defeat the Germans in World War I. He was promoted to Corporal and served as a front-line motorcycle courier and machine-gunner, surviving being shot twice and gassed.

He and his wife, Grace, also an immigrant form Bari, Italy, are buried together under the largest Pedone gravestone. Their three first-generation American born children all graduated from college, were professionals, and served as officers in the U.S. military. One son, who lies with them, Stephen Pedone, was a Flight Officer and pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and was killed in 1944, in a B-24 bomber during WW II. I was named after my Uncle. Additionally, my dad's sister, Anne Pedone, a WWII U.S. Army Nurse, will eventually be at Arlington, near-by, at the grave site of her first husband, an early Army helicopter pilot, who died during the Korean War.



The Pedone Family Military Service



Grandfather, Grandmother and Uncle



Father and Mother

The second Pedone gravestone, just in front, marks my mom and dad. Both served with the 9th Air Force in England during WWII. My dad, Vito, flew 25 missions into Nazi territory as the single pilot of a twin-engine ground attack A-20 aircraft. In the late night approaching “D-Day”, he was the co-pilot of the lead Pathfinder Troop Carrier C-47 aircraft, dropping the initial 101st Airborne Pathfinder paratroopers into Normandy, which led to the ultimate defeat of Germany.

He continued his 30+ year service career as a Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, serving in the initial Pacific atomic bomb tests, the formation of NATO, planning the Cuban Missile Crisis airborne invasion, commanding the ARPA Field Unit in Saigon, Vietnam, flying single pilot twin-engine ground attack B-26 Air Commando missions early in the Vietnam War, the development of the Global Positioning System, and the “Cold War” victory over Soviet communism.

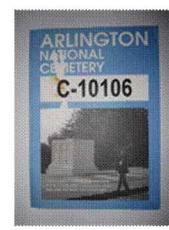
My mother, Jerry, a surgical nurse, was one of the first U.S. Army Air Corps Flight Nurses, flying C-47 medical evacuation missions bringing wounded form Normandy back to England. My mother’s military service is also honored in the National Women in the Military Memorial, at the main gate of Arlington National Cemetery. They are part of our “greatest generation”.



National Women in the Military
Memorial and Arlington Main Gate



Son – Timothy



Arlington National Cemetery
Pass

Eventually, my wife and I will be buried in the third adjoining grave, currently marked by a small headstone for my son, Timothy. My 25 year military career in Mapping, Charting & Geodesy, geospatial data & systems, and Intelligence, as an Air Force Cartographic/Geodetic Officer and Intelligence Officer, and 14 years as a defense contractor, afforded a unique opportunity to contribute to the operational readiness, combat effectiveness, and safety of U.S. strategic, tactical, and special operation forces world-wide, and our successful Cold War strategic nuclear deterrence, with the demise of the Soviet Union, and resulting freedom for the nations of Eastern Europe.

Thus, in this quiet Arlington hollow, a unique cluster of gravestones will mark three generations of an American family, who leave a ninety year legacy of service to our Country, 1914-2004, protecting our freedom and liberty, passing-on a brighter future, and together for eternity on this hallowed ground.

“There is no greater honor”

