

War friendship renewed years later

By MARTIN TOOMBS

SENECA FALLS — Harry Morgan was 20 years old and an Army soldier far from home in 1944 when he befriended a young English lad.

Morgan, now 66, fondly remembers the friendship he developed with 13-year-old Jack Clark during the four months his tank destroyer unit was in Stow-on-the-Wold, a town 60 miles from London. This was during the time when thousands of American troops were stationed all over England, preparing for the June, 1944, Normandy invasion.

"I just casually met this kid and started to carry on a conversation with him," said Morgan who lives with his wife Shirley in Seneca Manor Trailer Park.

Clark told Morgan about the good rabbit hunting in the area because of the war-caused shortage of ammunition and the soldier managed to get some shotgun shells so they could go hunting.

"We had 11 shells — and got 13 rabbits," he said. The rabbits were given to a butcher who prepared them and distributed them among the townspeople.

Because the English were experiencing a rough time with shortages of food and other items during the war, Morgan described conditions there in letters home. Then his mother began sending him things he could give to Clark and others.

When Morgan's unit moved to Europe to participate in the invasion of Germany, he lost touch with Clark — until recently.

Hoping to locate the friend he'd made 46 years ago, the Seneca Falls man sent a letter to the mayor of Stow-on-the-Wold in March and luckily it ended up in the hands of John Fifield, district councillor there who is a former school mate of Clark's.

Fifield contacted Clark, a truck driver who lives in Bledington, a village about three miles from Stow-on-the-Wold, and Clark quickly wrote to Morgan.

Morgan noted he has to keep reminding himself of the passage of time since they last saw each other. "He's no kid — he's 59 — but I still think of him as one," he said.

Since they made contact, he's gotten two letters from Clark and has sent three to him, Morgan said. "He wants to know if and when we can come over and see him,"



Harry Morgan of Seneca Falls looks at maps and letters he has received from Jack Clark in England. Morgan befriended Clark in England during World War II and recently regained contact with him. (Times photo by Martin Toombs)

he said.

Clark told Morgan in a letter he had considered trying to locate him, but with only his name and no address to go on, he didn't think he'd have much success.

He's also told Morgan that many buildings he would remember from his time in England are much the way he last saw them, including a pub, "The Bell Inn," which was frequented by American troops.

"My wife and I both want to go over," Morgan said. "We're sincerely thinking about it."

His success at finding Clark has given Morgan an incentive to try and find another person he met during the war.

When his unit was in Germany, it liberated a German prisoner of war camp which contained 200 to 300 British soldiers, Morgan said. At that time he became acquainted with a prisoner, John McColm of

Glasgow, Scotland. An effort a few years ago to find McColm failed but Clark may be able to help him with the search, he said.

Morgan had served seven years in the Army when he left the service in 1946. In 1960 he re-entered the Army, and served a year in Vietnam before ending his military career in 1973 while working at the Seneca Army Depot. He then worked as a civilian guard at the depot until his retirement in 1986.