Fifty years after OPERATIONS LEADER (4 October 1993) Odd Karlsen (now 75) met Sumner Davis (also 75) when Davis entered the airport in Bodø. The two men shook hands and embraced. Davis did not understand Norwegian. Karlsen did not understand English, but words seemed unnecessary. It had been 50 years since Odd Karlsen and his father (now deceased) had rescued Davis and McCarley from the Norwegian Sea after their dive bomber was shot down down by German anti-aircraft fire.

Before the Germans captured the two American airmen, they were taken care of by the people of Prestøya. (Priest island).

Morten Gryt who lived on an island nearby, was asked to translate because he spoke English. Sumner Davis took off his watch and ring and gave them to Morten Gryt. Morten Gryt died a few years ago, but his wife Elsa still had the ring and watch after 50 years. She told Davis, "It's important to me to return the ring and the watch."

During this meeting in Norway after 50 years, Odd Karlsen insisted on bringing Sumner Davis on a boat trip back to the place where his plane went down. When the two responded, Davis said, "You and your father did what you could. You saved my life. I will never forget that". It became one touching reunion.

Newspaper article, Nordlandsposten, Bodø, 2 October 1993

American pilot gets the ring back - 50 years later

Monday will be a special day for Elsa Gryt from Skjerstad near Bodø.

She shall meet the former American pilot Sumner R. Davis and return the clock and the ring he gave her, fifty years after his plane crashed into the sea at Helligvær, a group of islands off Bodø.

Sumner R. Davis took part in the same attack on the ship Rabat at anchor outside Bodø harbor on 4 October 1943 together with the American pilot Clyde A. Tucker and his gunner Stephen D. Bakran. They all came from the aircraft carrier USS Ranger and Tucker and Bakran were shot down and died. On Monday, the commemorative plaque will be presented at Bodø Airport.

Their bodies were found after 50 years - in the summer of 1993.

The plane carrying Davis and his gunner McCarley was hit by German anti-aircraft fire and they had to ditch in the sea near the small island of Prestoya on the Helligvær Islands.

(The name Prestøya can be directly translated as Presteøya and Helligvær as Helgenøya.)

They were captured by the Germans and brought to Bodø. Davis is among the guests at the presentation of the memorial for Bakran and Tucker in Bodø on Monday. So is Elsa Gryt.

Davis and his friend were taken care of by the people of Helligvær. Morten Gryt, Elsa's husband, who died in 1965, was summoned because he spoke English and could translate. The accident happened in daylight, and on the small islands it was nowhere to hide. And it was with sorrow that Morten and the others had to explain that the possibility of hiding them from the Germans and escaping was not good at all.

The two Americans were saddened by this message. Davis took off his ring and the watch and gave them to Morten Gryt, Elsa tells the newspaper. She still has the ring and watch.

After the war it was impossible to find out who the pilot was. But the Norwegian pilot Knut Støre - who is particularly interested in what happened in Bodø during the war - did not give up, and through him Davis was found and he recognized his things in pictures. But he said he didn't want to them back. *But for me it is very important to give the ring and the watch back,* Elsa Gryt said.

Solemnity, but no funeral

We will treat this in a solemn manner, but this will not be a delayed funeral, says John Erik Pettersen, president of Bodø Aviation History Society about what will happen on Monday with the presentation of the memorial for American pilot Clyde A. Tucker and his gunner Stephen D. Backran.

Monday marks exactly 50 years since the two were shot down over Bodø. They both died in the crash. They were found in the summer of 1993, and the final the identification is done at Sykehuset (hospital) Nordland in Bodø.

207 people have been invited to the ceremony, including 42 Americans. 35 of them will be here on Monday, among them the wife and son of Clyde A.

Tucker. The son was not born when his father was shot down over Bodø. Among the Americans are the charge d'affaire and military attaché at the American embassy in Oslo, together with war veterans from the aircraft carrier USS Ranger and their families. The Americans have all expressed that they are happy about the initiative from Bodø to honor the dead pilots this way.