

WINGS



News

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Fred R. Kaplan Editor

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Mt. Suribaci, Iwo Jima

70 years ago on this date Feb 19, 1945 the battle of Iwo Jima began with the US Marines landed on the black Volcano ashen sandy beach. It was my first full combat for me aboard my Ship, the USS Nemasket. We were a fuel ship that was ordered to anchor about 1000 yards off the beach so as to be accessible to the landing crafts to be refueled.

Our ship was one of the last ships that the Marines would pass before landing on the beach. I remembered as they passed us by how we waved them off with thumbs up wishing them God Speed. None of the Marines waved back as they were intent in meeting their fate in facing the awaiting Japanese army, who were well hidden in their underground tunnels during the heavy bombing prior to the marines landing,

As I watched the constant heavy bombing of the Island by planes from our Aircraft carriers and all of our warships as well, I thought that the Island itself would sink into the ocean. The first wave of Marines made their landing without facing any opposition. However when the second wave of marines arrived, suddenly the Japanese came out of their tunnels and out of their caves in Mt. Suribaci, and attack the first wave from behind and caught the second wave as they made their landing.

Sadly, I remembered seeing some of the Marines that we had waved to, now were as they passed us by floating face down in the water, killed in action. All of us who were topside of our ship watched in horror as the fighting was taking place. We quickly came to the realization that war is "Hell" We realized that we did not start this war for we all remembered Pearl Harbor on Dec.7,1941

A few days later together with a shipmate, I noticed a flag that was flying on the peak of Mt.Suribaci but was unable to see whose flag it was. The weather was cold drizzly misty one and I was unable to see the identity of the flag. I did not think that it would be our flag since it was too early in the landing of the Marines.

Suddenly, it became clear for us to see and much to our amazement it was our flag with the recognizable stars and stripes waving in the breeze.

I felt a thrill trough my body and exclaimed loudly to my shipmate what I was seeing through my binoculars. I could hardly believe my eyes.

How those Marines managed to climb up that mountain so soon after their landing was amazing. Suddenly, with pride in my heart I turned to look at the mast of my ship with old Glory waving high in the breeze.

I later went to the Quarter Master and asked him if he would save the flag thas flying on our ship when it came time to take it down to be replaced with a new flag. He promised that he would save it for me to have as a memento.

I came home with that flag the following year in 1946, put it away in my closet at home and never thought about it. Later when I saw the publicity that was given to the amazing photo of the Marines raising the flag on Mt. Suribaci that was taken by Joe Rosenthal, I now realized that my ship's flag also became historic to me. I now take it with me whenever I am invited to speak to students at various schools to talk about my experiences in WWII. They all become anxious to have their picture taken with the flag and make their connection with its history.

I make it a point to remind them, that the freedom we all now enjoy, did not come to us free. It was paid for by those who made their extreme sacrifice in giving up their life to preserve it. They are to me the real heroes, and not only that, many of them are either buried on foreign soil or buried at Sea, never returning to the United States of America. God Bless them and God Bless America.

Barney Leone

Submissions to Wings News
No later than the Last
Wednesday of the Month
Email to ndbaliber@gmail.com

**-UNCLE SAM NEEDS YOU-
FOR THE VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT**

In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed legislation authorizing the Veterans History Project. The legislation was signed into law on October 27, 2000, by President Clinton. The program's purpose is to collect the histories of those valiant people who have protected our freedoms. Some stories are happy, some tragic, some funny and some sad. All the veteran's stories are important.

Once a veteran's story is recorded, copies of the resultant DVD are sent to and archived in the Library of Congress. Copies are also provided to the veteran, so his/her family and friends can be aware of the sacrifices and/or adventures of the veteran. There is absolutely NO COST to the veteran. Funding for the DVD materials and postage is provided by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and the Members of the World Wars (MOWW), a veteran's organization.

My name is Ken Sobel. I was asked to volunteer my expertise in DVD production by Brigadier General Dan Pemberton (USAF, retired) to aid in the making of the DVDs for this program. General Pemberton does the interviews himself and most of the interviews take place at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. This is a very worthwhile project.

If you are interested or know of someone who is, please call me. My phone number is: **Ken Sobel - 818-995-6865**. I will then pass on your interest to General Pemberton who will provide you with the paperwork that the Library of Congress requires.

Thank you for your service and I look forward to your participation.

*It is said that life is a tapestry.
Each veteran's story is a thread in that great tapestry of*



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

**BRIAN MAC GREGOR-APRIL 2, 1955
THOMAS MAIDEN-APRIL 4, 1949
EDWARD NOLAN-APRIL 7, 1921
MARK AX-APRIL 7, 1949
CLIFFORD WOLF-APRIL 14, 1919
MARION LOVELACE-APRIL 16, 1927
HARRY NELSON-APRIL 18, 1923
VINCENT CICONE-APRIL 18, 1941
DAVID COHEN-APRIL 20, 1924
GEORGE STONE-APRIL 24, 1927
ANDY KOPETZKY-APRIL 25, 1951
BARRY PRAVONE-APRIL 25, 1953
JOSEPH MUELLER-APRIL 26, 1949
PETER MARSHALL-APRIL 30, 1940**

Port Moresby

As I approached the front door of Harry and Gita Nelson's home, I was eager to learn about his experiences in the south Pacific stationed at Port Moresby, New Guinea.

But first I had to get inside their home guarded by two barking dogs. Soon Harry welcomed me in and Gita herded Amber and Bonnie to another room in the house. He ushered me to the sun porch.

This future B 26 bomber gunner joined the Air Corps before Pearl Harbor. On that fateful day he was outside of Washington, D.C. for training. The Army's plan was to send the enlisted men to Texas, then to Edwards Air Force base known as Muroc. Apparently, the Air Corps crews were to island hop across the Pacific to set up somewhere near the Philippines or Australia. It was decided to disassemble the planes in San Francisco, ship them to Hawaii, and re-assembled them. The B 26 crews continued island hopping until reaching Townsville, Australia.

The Japanese had fortified air bases in the Dutch East Indies, Timor and the Solomon Islands plus half of the Japanese Navy was operating north of New Guinea. Thus Port Moresby became the air base to launch daily air raids on Japanese targets. The enemy would also bomb our bases in this area.

Unfortunately, B 26 bombing raids were limited due to the short range of the plane, limited replacement parts and limited replacement of crews. Often an Australian navigator would be part of a crew. There were few maps to help navigators cross the Pacific. This crew member flew only 18 missions before he and other crews were sent back to the United States to train crews that were needed in Europe. After this mission he was ordered back to the Pacific Theatre.

Harry Nelson became a photo tech reviewing reconnaissance photos. This job earned him the rank of staff sergeant. He was busy until the end of the war printing aerial photos as we pushed the Japanese in the Pacific further north. From a shelf with several white binders

Continued on Page 3

Harry picked one with photos of him with members of the crews he served with.

At the end of WWII this civilian enrolled at USC majoring in English. Upon graduation he sought employment at the Los Angeles Times as writer. He was hired for the circulation department. In 1948 after Otis Chandler became the CEO and was touring the facility, Harry told the boss that he wanted to be writer after serving many years in his present job. CEO Otis Chandler appointed him as a feature writer. For decades Harry Nelson was a feature writer on issues concerning new developments in health care. His articles appeared repeatedly in the editorial pages of the L.A. Times.

At age 65 this former Air Corps gunner from Port Morseby retired as a feature writer. He continued doing freelance writing for groups and organizations involved in medical care like the World Health Organization. Harry coauthored "The Revenge of the Red Raiders" about the history of the 22nd Bomb Group.

We spent the next few minutes chatting about our involvements with the Chandler family and the L.A. Times. Harry spelled out his admiration for Mrs. Buffy Chandler and all her good deeds such as the Music Center and her activities sponsoring the Women of the Year. In the early seventies, I interviewed one of the Chandler ladies who was applying as Director of Pacoima Revitalization.

We shared experiences as Amber curled up by me and Bonnie roamed through the house walking in and out the doggie door to bark at strangers.

Ed Moreno



LUNCH AND LEADERSHIP

It's Sunday morning, with a cup of coffee and my cell phone I reset the time forward one hour. Loosing Brian McGragor pulled me down to my writing pad. I must account for this place in time. Too many good friends have gone lately Brian's passing was too soon.

Last April 24th we gathered at West Hills Pizza for Thursday lunch, we talked about a news letter. We need to be informed and involved.

Neil Baliber had designed a masthead, Ed Moreno had just interviewed Ed Noland and Art had 4 places .WOW was invited to. Steve the restaurant owner gave us his business card and ten dollars to sponsor the first Wings News.

This march 5th we gathered at the Marriott Hotel for the Wings over Wendy's 13th anniversary and leadership luncheon. A long table was set under a glass skylight for 40 members and the doors where open to the patio making the room feel larger and the buffet was ready.

Art Sherman with his bright manor and good advice; sat in the middle so he could speak to us. After lunch we presented Art with an award that consisted of an oak free form arch connected to black marble squares on each bottom end.

The printed inscription read MAN OF THE YEAR ART SHERMAN of WINGS OVER WENDY'S 13th ANNIVERSARY AND LEADERSHIP luncheon. This presentation went with instructions. The recipient of this award has to keep it for a year and present it at next year's anniversary and leadership luncheon to a deserving WOW member.

This first annual NAVIGATOR TO THE NEW YEAR award is not an Emmy, It is not Oscar and it is not A Tony award .This leadership award is called a Fanny award. Yes a Fanny, an acronym for FIRST ANUAL NAVIGATOR TO THE NEW YEAR Award.

Before Mondays meeting was called to order Art thank me and said there's no room in the house so he put his Fanny in the basement never to be seen again. Will see what happens next year.

Fred R. Kaplan Editor



Or thanks to the Pin-Up Girls for coming to our meeting with the calendars raising money for handicapped Vets.

To donate www.pinupsforvets.com

WOW*

'Welcome Our Warriors'

POST #2



A meeting of Veterans and those interested in Veteran experiences. Open to Veterans of all services in the San Fernando Valley

All Meetings are FREE

EVERY TUESDAY 9am - 11am

for more info contact:

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shermie2@aol.com

Howard Swerdlick 818-883-3194

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