

WINGS



NEWS

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Ed Reynolds Publisher

Email Wings News at Ed_ReynoldsJr@msn.com

Judy Reynolds Editor

WOW What a Celebration!



On January 12, 2017, a group of 190 Wings Over Wendy's members', guests and friends gathered at the 94th Aero Squadron Restaurant at the Van Nuys Airport to celebrate:

- 15 years of continuous Monday meetings in rain, shine and holidays.
- Steve Politis who has been there from the beginning years of the meetings and turned **100 years old** the day before
- Ron and Diane Ross, owners of Wendy's, Platt Village, West Hills, who have graciously provided free space for us to meet
- Art Sherman's eight years of leading the meetings.
- Our remaining World War II members
- and be entertained by Roy Firestone.

Bob Donovan served as the Master of Ceremonies and was instrumental in obtaining the venue and organizing the event. Debi Brown from the 94th Aero Squadron helped get vendors to donate the tent and parking areas. Karen Vegtel recorded reservations, Howard Swerdlick served as Finance Chairman for the collection of the money and paid the bills. Mike LaVere, Harlis Brend, and Shirley Andrews provided pictures for both Roy's performance and a slide show of the departed during the dining. Ed and Judy Reynolds produced the name tents with table assignments

and color dots for entrée selection.

The weather did not cooperate and since the attendance had exceeded the largest room in the restaurant, the event was held in a tent outside the restaurant next to the Van Nuys Airport taxiway

Paul Boghossian managed a crew including, Maurice Vasquez, David Greenberg, Barry Chapman, Richard Myers, Gary Rocklin, and Bob Freud, that helped guide the attendees to parking places and the correct areas in the restaurant. Poor Paul got soaked in the cold rain and Bob had to leave before the food was served.

Inside the early arrivals, who wanted up-close parking spaces, were treated to hot coffee and pastries by the several fireplaces in the restaurant while the staff set up the tables in the tent. Often, the staff were caught in rain showers as they walked from the restaurant to the tent. Inside the tent, Roy Firestone and his soundman set up and rehearsed his act. The lunch committee of Bob Donovan, Howard Swerdlick and Ed Reynolds shuttled back and forth helping setup.

In the restaurant, Karen Vegtel, Judy Reynolds, Laura Donovan and Domenic Ranelletti managed the "name tents" and entrée tickets, distributing them when the Event Manager gave us the green light. Doug Stebleton and Jay Wertz interviewed attendees.



Photo by Howard Swerdlick

Around noon the Event Manager gave us the green light to taxi out the door to the tent with two US Marines in dress uniform assisting people down the steps and into the tent.



The attendees found tables with a vase of red, white and blue carnations and a dog tag draped around the vase of one of the 30 WWII veterans that attended the event.

Between rain showers jet aircraft taxied past just 30 feet from the tent. The tent, the rain, the wet floor and aircraft engine noise contributed to memories of our service days. Very fitting for many of us but not for our wives.



Missing Man Table photo by Harlis Brend

On the screen was a continuous loop slide show of pictures of our departed members. On each table was a list

of the departed and in the center of the tent was a “Missing Man Table”. The table was round to represent everlasting concern on the part of the survivors for their missing loved ones. The tablecloth was white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their country’s call to arms. A single red rose in a vase, signified the blood that many have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. A slice of lemon on the bread plate: represents the bitter fate of the missing. Salt sprinkled on the bread plate symbolic of the countless fallen tears of families. An inverted glass represents the fact that the missing and fallen cannot partake. A Bible represents the spiritual strength and faith to sustain those lost from our country. A lit candle is reminiscent of the light of hope which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to the open arms of a grateful nation. An empty chair: for the missing and fallen that aren't present and a Wings Over Wendy’s hat in remembrance of the faithful attendance to our meetings. Bob Donovan read the ceremony script.

Following the Missing Man Table ceremony, Bob introduced our honorees and honored guests which included: Steve Politis, Art Sherman, Ron and Diane Ross, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, ex-Councilmember Dennis Zine, John Lee and Ron Rubine representing Councilmember Mitch Englander, Kenny LaSalle, representing Congressman Tony Cardenas, John Alford representing Congressman Brad Sherman, Ivan Anderson representing Assemblymember Matt Dababneh, Karl Boeckmann and Raffy Astvasadoorian.

Connie Brehm spoke in memory of her father, Bill Blair, and thanked the group for their attendance at his memorial and for their friendship and support over the many years he was an active attendee at meetings and events.

Steve, Art, the Rosses and Roy Firestone were presented with certificates from each of the political offices. Bill Tapp and Joe Mueller representing the Tarzana group announced they are purchasing a chair in honor of Art Sherman at American Legion Post 43. In addition to Bob Donovan: Art Sherman and Ed Reynolds addressed the gathering as the meals were being served. Then we were treated to Roy Firestone’s fabulous performance of singing and storytelling of some of his most memorable interviews.

When the show was complete, Roy sold autographed copies of his book, donating half the sales to Wings Over Wendy’s. The rain let up to allow the crowd to return to the cars without getting wet.

The event will be remembered as the most outstanding celebration of Wings Over Wendy’s since its founding in 2002.

Wings Over Wendy's in the news

Valley News Group Article: JAN 12, 2017

Wings Over Wendy's 100-year Old Veteran and Wendy's Honored

Reported by: Kathleen Sterling, Publisher Valley News Group

Members of the "greatest generation" honored their own today. Wings Over Wendy's held a celebration lunch today to honor their oldest member and the owner of Wendy's, where they hold their meetings.

The organization of veteran aviators has met continuously every Monday morning for 15 years at Wendy's in Platt Village. The owners of the restaurant, Ron and Diane Ross, were honored at the luncheon for their continued support of the group. Wings Founder Fred "Crash" Blechman was a Navy F4U Corsair Pilot who just met buddies for lunch at Wendy's. Over time the gang grew and wanted to meet in the morning, but Ross wasn't open for breakfast. He agreed to open for the group, which now numbers over 200, and serve them free coffee. His only caveat is there is one table and two chairs reserved for "customers." Ross said, "I wish more people could see what this generation was all about - they'd have a much greater appreciation of why we are the country we are today."

One of the generation he spoke about was also honored. Steve Politis celebrated his 100th birthday. Politis was a radioman in WWII on a B-17 bomber that was shot down over Croatia. He went on to become a teacher, and at age 98 was still teaching algebra.



Councilman Blumenfield Honors Steve Politis.

Also, recognized at the luncheon was Wings Over Wendy's "fearless leader" Art Sherman for his eight years of leadership. He said they were a "band of brothers" who

shared the same story. Sherman was shot down over Blas, Austria, and still has his helmet with a hole in it. He told guests that the "real heroes are not here. They are the ones buried overseas."

Councilman Bob Blumenfield presented certificates to Politis, Sherman and the Rosses, as did a representative from Mitch Englander's office.

Emmy award-winning and cable ACE Award-winning host Roy Firestone MC'd the event and sang patriotic songs.

Other members of the group were called out and old stories told about their war service. Luncheon guests numbered over 200, with Wings Over Wendy's members, wives, friends, supporters and community leaders. One member commented that there were "so many patriots in the room."

Most of the original members of the group are gone. Not in attendance at this event was Eli Baker, the only member who was ever a POW. Baker was shot down and captured in Germany.

All the men - and the several women - who are members had stories to share at the luncheon. They gathered at the iconic 94th Aero Squadron at the Van Nuys Airport, where many of them continued flying long after their service ended. Many at this age could not stand for the national anthem, but they all sang their hearts out.

LA Daily News Article: January 27, 2017 They're still flying high at 'Wings over Wendy's': Dennis McCarthy



This March 5, 2012 file photo shows Art Sherman at the 10th anniversary of Wings Over Wendy's in West Hills. Wings Over Wendy's is a local group of aviation veterans from several branches of the military who meet at the Wendy's to share stories and organize for various veterans causes. File photo

By [Dennis McCarthy](#), LA Daily News
(Continued on Page 4, column 1)

“The flak went through my helmet, entered my head, and out the hole came all my brains. Since I couldn’t fly anymore I went before a review board, and naturally, having no brains, they made me an intelligence officer.”
Art Sherman, B-24 bombardier and intelligence officer in WWII.

The laugh’s the first thing that gets you. It’s infectious. You can see why the guys loved Art Sherman as their leader these past eight years at Wings Over Wendy’s.

It’s a raucous group of 100 or so old flyboys, bombardiers, tail gunners, and radiomen from World War II, Korea and Vietnam who meet every Monday morning at a Wendy’s Restaurant in West Hills.

Most are in their 80s and 90s now, with one — Steven Politis, a radioman on a B-17 bomber during World War II — just turning 100 a few weeks ago. There’s a lot of kidding going on and old war stories to tell, but the reality is these meetings have become a lifeline for many of these men.

It’s a chance to start the week surrounded with camaraderie and laughs instead of sitting at home bored and depressed waiting for the clock to run out.

Some are lonely widowers whose worried daughters and sons had read past columns I’ve written about the group and urged their military fathers to stop by and take a look.

Others have wives who couldn’t stand to see their once vibrant husbands just sitting in front of the TV set from morning to night counting their days. They needed something to light a spark, and Wings Over Wendy’s has given it to them.

“Sometimes, I’ll just sit outside and watch the guys come in with their walkers or caregivers, and see their faces light up,” Art says. “This is the highlight of their week, just sitting around talking about the good times when they were younger and needed.

“If this could be done in more places, I think many of our older veterans could live a lot longer.”

A couple of weeks ago, Wings celebrated its 15th anniversary with a luncheon bash over at the 94th Aero Squadron Restaurant in Van Nuys to celebrate the 100th birthday of Politis, a fascinating guy I [wrote about last year](#) on his 99th.

The meeting brought back a lot of memories from 2002, including one from the last surviving member of the original founders — Lee Auger, 87, a naval radioman in the Korean War.

Lee was there at the beginning with Fred “Crash” Blechman and Mickey Epstein, who were having lunch one

day at Wendy’s when the idea of reaching out to other retired military aviators to join them was brought up.

Crash called me at the paper inviting me to meet the guys for lunch. Turns out he got his nickname by crashing five Navy Corsair fighter planes on landings at the end of World War II — earning him the dubious reputation of taking more U.S. planes out of commission than any enemy ace.

“After you wrote that first story, 25 guys showed up the next week, and another 40 the following week,” Lee says. “Ron Ross, the owner of the Wendy’s, said we were ruining his lunch business.”

Ron and his wife, Diane, have a soft spot for vets, and were giving Crash and the guys a burger and fries for \$1 with free drinks for their meetings. But when Wings grew to 50, there were no seats left for his full paying lunch customers, so Ron offered them another deal. He’d open every Monday morning just for them, and throw in coffee with a bagel or Danish, and free refills for a buck sixty-five.

After Crash died in 2008, the gavel went to Art. He had been one of those lonely guys after his wife died. His daughter read about Wings and suggested he stop by one Monday morning before making his rounds as a furniture salesman. He finally retired a few years back at 93.

“Crash gave me a job selling raffle tickets to the guys,” Art says. “He thought we should keep the group small, no more than 40 members because he always thought, how can you know 100 people?”

“When I took over I knew one of the big advantages we had was the fact we were getting older veterans out of their houses, and that’s what I’ve been trying to do ever since. The more the better.”

But he can feel the years starting to catch up to him so he’s handed the gavel over to Ed Reynolds, a retired Air Force Lt. Colonel who served in Vietnam. He’s a thoughtful, soft-spoken, social media savvy guy.

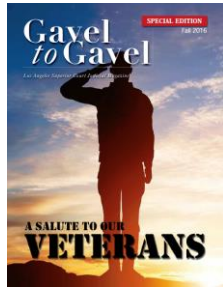
“I’m leaving Wings in good hands,” Art said this week. “He was an intelligence officer too, but with brains.”

If you know of any military aviation veterans who need to get out of the house more, Wings meets every Monday from 9 until 11 a.m. at the Wendy’s at 6430 Platt Ave. in West Hills.

A new group with 25 members meets at the same time on Tuesday mornings at the Tarzana Community & Cultural Center, 19130 Ventura Blvd., Tarzana.

Dennis McCarthy’s column runs on Friday. He can be reached at dmccarthynews@gmail.com.

Gavel to Gavel Special Edition Fall 2016: A Salute to Our Veterans



The Closest Encounter

by Judge Thomas Trent Lewis

Born in Holdrege, Nebraska, in January 1924, Capt. Charles Allyn Lewis enlisted in the United States Army Aviation Cadet Program in 1942. He was 18. After phased pilot training during 1943 and 1944, he was commissioned in May 1944 as a second lieutenant. In January 1945, he was deployed to England to fly with the 384th Bomb Group. Then 21 years old, Capt. Lewis flew 25 combat missions. Mission 20 evolved into the closest encounter of all.



Crew of the "Recall"

On April 5, 1945, while unleashing an air attack on Ingolstadt, Germany, Capt. Lewis, as first pilot, commanded the B-17 flying fortress nicknamed "Recall." During the return flight to England, the bomb group was surrounded by another frightful enemy—the darkening clouds and the furious weather that took down many planes during WWII.

Flying instruments into a thickly clouded cold front near the Belgium border, in customary close-knit formation and as the weather worsened, the bomber group spread out to avoid collisions. As the planes spread out, another B-17 accidentally struck the Recall. Under the command of another B-17 pilot, the other plane's propeller shredded the right-side window of the Recall cockpit nearly removing the front end. Unbelievably, the front windshields were not damaged.

Capt. Lewis sounded the alarm: stand by for bailout. The Recall plummeted into a critical downward turn because of the impact of the collision. After the impact, the three crewmen seated in the nose of the beleaguered Recall had the presence of mind to bail out over Belgium. The

entire crew of the other B-17 bailed out because their plane was critically disabled.

While fortunate to have all engines operational, Capt. Lewis was still flying "blind," having lost the plane's altimeter, air speed indicators and artificial horizon gyroscope. Fortunately, the needle ball for the plane's altitude and a magnetic compass remained operational. Capt. Lewis fought to regain control to head westerly. Instinctively responding because of extensive training, he maneuvered the Recall above the clouds. Thus, the under cast provided a horizon.

Contemplating whether to ditch the plane over the North Sea, suddenly a break in the clouds revealed an allied P-51 Fighter field. While adequate for the light, quickly accelerating P-51, the strip was woefully short for safely landing the bigger, lumbering and severely disabled flying fortress. Capt. Lewis successfully landed the plane. Miraculously, everyone in both planes survived and returned safely back to the 384th's base at Grafton Underwood, England, for more missions.



While it was the last flight for the Recall, Capt. Lewis continued flying missions over Nazi-occupied areas after the midair collision. Not surprisingly, reluctant to fly again, his other crew members told Capt. Lewis they preferred to fly again only if he was at the controls. Continuing to serve after the war ended, Capt. Lewis' bomb group flew French refugees from North Africa back to France.

In recognition for his service, Capt. Lewis received four Air Medals, the European-African-Middle Eastern (EAME) Campaign Medal with three battle stars and the World War II Victory Medal.

After the war, Capt. Lewis returned to civilian life and married Dolores Simmonds. Capt. Lewis and Dolores had three children: myself, Steven Elliot Lewis and Merrin Marie Lewis.

Inspired by the events involving the mid-air collision, his family commissioned a brick placed in the Road to Victory walkway commemorating the event at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans which reads, "Cpt. C. Allyn Lewis—Recall Crew Safe With Love & Honor." He is also honored at a veteran's memorial located in Simi Valley, California. He has spoken on several occasions to high school students about the events of World War II. His story is archived in the Library of Congress. He has been

interviewed and recorded in several documentaries about WWII.

On March 9, 2016, Capt. Lewis received the French Legion of Honor (Chevalier de la Légion D'Honneur) for helping liberate France. The Honorable Christophe Lemoine, Consul General of France in Los Angeles, presided over the medal ceremony at the American Legion Post 283 located in Pacific Palisades, California. France's highest award conferred upon men and women, either French citizens or foreign nationals, the Légion is given for outstanding achievements in military or civilian life.

Now married for more than 68 years, Capt. Lewis and Dolores are the grandparents of four grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Professionally, Capt. Lewis enjoyed a successful and lengthy career in institutional real estate investments until late in the year 1990.

At 92, he still plays golf and enjoys his weekly visits with other veterans every Monday in West Hills at Wings Over Wendy's.

His motto: "Keep 'em flying!"
I'm proud to say, "He's my dad."

Speakers

January 30, 2017

Judy Crockett



On January 30, 2017, we were treated to a fascinating presentation by Judy Crockett about her father Clarence Hamilton, who served in both World War I and II.

Born in Winterset, Madison County, Iowa, Judy graduated from the University of Iowa where she played the bag pipes in the band that marched in the Rose Parade twice in the 1950's. Impressed with California weather she got a job in Long Beach, CA after graduating from college.

Her father graduated from Iowa in 1917 and entered law school but left in 1918 to become an Ambulance driver in WWI. For his heroic service in France transporting wounded from the front lines to the hospital he was awarded the French Croix de guerre. After the war, he returned to law school, and earned a law degree in 1920. He practiced law in Winterset until 1930 when he was appointed as a special assistant to the Iowa State Attorney General. He specialized in tax law and tried eight cases in the US Supreme Court winning seven of them.

In 1940 he moved his family to Iowa City to be close

to his older children attending the University. On Christmas, 1943, Judy who was just 5 years old found her father in a US Army officers uniform. Her father announced with a son in the US Navy that at age 50 he joined the US Army Judge Advocate Corp. He was sent to Battle Creek, MI for training and then four weeks later the family visited him as he was transferring to Yale University for further training in Army affairs and then to England. Judy remembers that he told her that when boarded the train her mother and two sisters would probably cry but he expected her to be brave. She remembers her last words to him as the train departed "Daddy, Daddy, look I am not crying."

Two years ago, a lady in Judy's church offered a course on how to write a life story. Since her mother had kept her father's letters and made copies for all the children, Judy read them and used them to write his story.

His training was for the "de-Nazification of Germany". In May 1944, in England, her father was selected as just one of 15 out of 1,000 to attend a British Civil Officers Staff School. He wrote it was intense. One project was how to move 10,000 refugees without getting them on the main roads and figuring the food and supplies required to support a community of 130,000 providing 2,000 calories a day and more for workers and pregnant woman.

He wrote about how cold and damp it was in England and the bombing. The process to cross the English Channel in September 1944 took a long time. They would pack and wait and then move and wait and finally on September 7, 1944 he wrote he had had only sea rations to eat for a week and was sleeping on the steel deck because their bed rolls were in the trucks on the lower deck and they were not permitted to get them. On September 16th, he wrote it would be two weeks since he had had a bath or changed his clothes. He then wrote he was sleeping in a French Chateau, no bed, on marble floors no bathrooms in 117 rooms, two toilets, no lavatory and one faucet outside for 75 men. They bathed using water in their steel helmets.

While in France he attended lectures on the Germany Courts and Legal System. He wrote letters on values, morals and ethics. One story Judy told us was a letter describing a man and his son walking on a dirt road. The father saw a house shoe in the dirt and asked his son to pick it up but the son refused. Later he discarded a strawberry, his son picked it up, and then another strawberry and his son picked it up. His son told him how he liked the strawberries. The father replied, "you would not pick up the horseshoe I wanted but you would pick up the strawberry's you like". The moral he wrote Judy: "Always think of others before you think of yourself."

Next, he went to Belgium, he wrote how clean, courteous the people were, and then he finally got to Germany, and the city of Nuremburg, on April 20, 1945,

Hitler's birthday. He found a city with no gas, no water, and no lights with plenty of dirt and brick dust.

He wrote of many sad cases in his office. One case was an American boy, 21 years old that was visiting his Grandparents at the age of 13 and could not return to the US. He had a case of a German woman that had been beat up by Russian Refugees, German soldiers surrendering, and British prisoners that had escaped German Camps who wanted to work.

On April 27 he wrote he had his first hot meal, inspected 4 prisons, conferred with Prison Directors, removed one from office and appointed a successor, and conferred with the president of the Bar.

May 20th [after the surrender on May 7], he wrote about the city of Nuremberg and resistance in the intercity that was finally stopped when locals used the US speakers to plead with the resistance to stop and save the city from further destruction. His duties and responsibilities were to take control of all courts; preserve court records; take control of the prisons; require reports on all prisoners and employees and have them screened for Nazi tendencies; review the case of 105 political prisoners; acting as a judge on cases of people disobeying military orders and providing legal advice to other officers.

Every day he heard complaints about rape committed by American soldiers. He tried thousands of cases of curfew violations, black marketing and rape.

In June, he wrote about the explosion in Bremen, Germany that kill 40. He joked that he had plenty of insurance and a tough hide. July's letters described his meeting with US Supreme Court Justice Jackson as he surveyed Germany for a location for the post war trials. When Nuremberg was selected, Major Hamilton had to move his staff to the suburb city of Furth. He wrote about the two men who hid and lied about the Holy Roman Empire Crown Jewels. He tried the men and sentenced them to 5 years and fined \$25,000. The men were pardoned after the USA left. He turned down an offer to be a prosecutor at the trials.

When he was returning home one of his secretaries gave him a silver tray her nephew had taken from Hitler's bunker. Judy showed us the tray.

She finished by telling us about a visit she and her husband made to the museum in Nuremberg where she gave them copies of her father's letters.

Member Profiles

Stiles Learned About Wings in Ridgecrest



1955

Now

By Ray Rosenbaum

Most of our members first heard about Wings Over Wendy's from a local friend. Bob Stiles, on the other hand, was introduced to our organization while attending a high school reunion in Ridgecrest, CA, where he graduated from Sherman E Burroughs High School adjacent to the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake and Bakersfield College. We know our fame has spread across the area since our founding in 2002, but Ridgecrest is a far stretch. Soon we will be known nationally.

Bob Stiles, has lived in the Valley since 1983, started attending our Monday meetings in 2005 and has been an active and valuable member ever since.

He served in the Air Force from 1955 to 1959 as an air traffic controller, mostly at Castle AFB, Merced, CA and was discharged as an Airman First Class.

Stiles, big and tall at 6 ft. 2, is very athletic, and a former scuba diver, surfer and sky diver. He holds a commercial pilot license in single and multi-engine planes, so he still likes to take to the air but mostly in coach.

Married to wife Sharon for 30 years with two step-children, Bob also finds time to tutor first through third graders at Limerick Elementary school in Language Art. He also serves as president of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association.

Born at the Fort Lewis Army Hospital, Washington, Stiles moved to California in 1945 and after military service worked at the Long Beach Naval Shipyard until it closed in 1997. Since then he's had an active career in the movie industry as an extra and with a few bit parts. He appeared in "Green Mile", "Training Day", and "Pearl Harbor." For many years, he was a member of the Screen Actors Guild.

He's in his ninth year of tutoring and still attends Pierce College, performing in open mike comedy as "Micky Gillette".

If you really want to know more about him, read the excellent script he has written about his true-life exploits. I tried to peddle it to an agent, but thus far have been unsuccessful. Maybe you have a contact. I think it would make an excellent movie.

Bob will be 80 in March, so he still has time to brush

it up.

The Buoy Man - Lazar Saunders



Photo by Ed Reynolds
By Ed Moreno

The sketch of the son of Russian immigrant parents begins with the birth of Lezar Saunders at the LA. County Hospital. A native Angelino born in East LA. He lived his younger years in City Terrace where he attended Wilson High School (grades 7-12). He knew "little Freddie" who went to Roosevelt High. In the 20's, 30's and 40's, the Jewish, Japanese and Mexican communities were all strong communities in the. East LA. area.

In 1951, he, like his peers, joined a service. The Army required 3 years, the Navy demanded 4 years and the Coast Guard only 3 years of service. He and many of his buddies enlisted in the Coast Guard.

Fortunately, he was sent to a Navy Training School to become an electrician. Boot Camp at Alameda followed. Then Lezar was assigned to the U.S.S. French, a Destroyer Escort in San Francisco. He routinely sailed from San Francisco, along the Northern Coast of California to Crescent City maintaining buoys. During the Korean conflict, he sailed as an electrician on a weather ship. Next, he sailed from San Francisco to Hawaii to Japan and then to Adak in the Aleutian Island chain.

Although his ship was slated to be decommissioned on the Atlantic coast, his ship was sent to Midway Island. There the crews changed ships and continued with their new assignments. His last set of orders found this electrician on the Atlantic, sailing from St. Petersburg to Key West, routinely maintaining every buoy on the way. In 1954, buoy man was discharged.

His first civilian job was at Bethlehem Steel as an electrician. All the electric motors were D.C. - direct current. Soon Lezar was married with two children. In a few years, he came down with a lung infection of unknown causes.

Now living in Southern California, he became a power switchboard operator at the Department of Water and Power. He held this job for 30 years. During these years, he held many second jobs. He and his wife practiced the "good life." His second income allowed them to take numerous cruises and travel in many foreign lands. He

worked for Cooper Electric and many other companies. Eventually, he started his own electrical company contracting home, industrial, and commercial jobs. His stroke at seventy-five limited his working life, so he enlisted his son to take a greater role in running the company.

He is very proud that he has not received any complaints about the company's work. The company's policy is: "If the customer is happy. the customer pays If the customer is not happy with the job, he does not pay until he is happy".

Editorial Comment

By Ed Reynolds

Reflecting on the events of the last several weeks planning and executing the Celebration Luncheon followed by reading the reports of the luncheon in the press I searched for a good definition on why we meet. Dennis McCarthy did a good job of documenting Art's thoughts on way we meet in his LA Daily News article. But, at a Tuesday meeting, Joe Mueller read an article from a US Marine Corp reunion paper titled "*I know now why*" taken from a book by Micheal Norman, USMC Golf 2/9, which I also want to share with you.

I know now why

By Micheal Norman, USMC Golf 2/9

I know now why men who have been to war yearn to reunite.

Not to tell stories or look at old pictures.

Not to laugh or weep on one another's knee. Comrades gather because they long to be with men who once acted their best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity.

I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the U. S. [Military].

But I know them in a way I know no other men.

I have never since given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life.

They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me.

It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another.

I cannot say where we are headed. Ours are not perfect friendships; those are the province of legend and myth. A few of my comrades drift far from me now, sending back only occasional word.

I know that one day even these could fall to silence.

Some of these men will stay close, a couple, perhaps, always at hand.

As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day.

I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thoughts will be of my family and my comrades, such good men.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force

75th Birthday



Bruce Monkman sent this to me on January 28, 2017. Many of our members have been members of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in WWII and like myself in SAC after the war. I proudly served in three 8th AF SAC units and won the 1960 8th AF Combat Crew Navigation Competition.

Under the terms of the tripartite pact with Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan, Nazi Germany was obliged to render aid in the event that either ally was attacked. On December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Ambassador Hiroshi Ōshima came to Joachim von Ribbentrop, looking for a commitment of support from the German Foreign Minister.

Ribbentrop balked. Germany was under no obligation to intervene with their ally having been the aggressor. Adolf Hitler thought otherwise. He couldn't stand Roosevelt, and thought it was just a matter of time before the two countries were at war. He might as well beat the American President to the punch.

It was 9:30am Washington time on December 11, when German Chargé d'Affaires Hans Thomsen handed the note to American Secretary of State Cordell Hull. For the second time in the diplomatic history of the United States and Germany, the two nations were in a state of war.

48 days later, at Hunter Field in Savannah, the Eighth Bomber Command was activated as part of the United States Army Air Forces. It was January 28, 1942.

The 8th was intended to support operation "Super Gymnast", the invasion of what was then French North Africa. Super Gymnast was canceled in April. By May, the 8th Bomber Command had moved its headquarters to a former girls' school in High Wycombe, England, from where it conducted the strategic bombing campaign against Nazi Germany.

Re-designated the Eighth Air Force on February 22, 1944, at its peak the "Mighty Eighth" could dispatch over 2,000 four-engine bombers and more than 1,000 fighters on a single mission. 350,000 people served in the 8th AF during the war in Europe, with 200,000 at its peak in 1944.

By 1945, the Wehrmacht had a new joke to tell itself: "When we see a silver plane, it's American. A black plane, it's British. When we see no plane, it's German". American aviation paid a heavy price for it.

Half of the US Army Air Force casualties in World

War II were suffered by the 8th, over 47,000 casualties, with more than 26,000 killed. By war's end, 8th Air Force personnel were awarded 17 Medals of Honor, 220 Distinguished Service Crosses, and 442,000 Air Medals. There were 261 fighter aces in the 8th, 31 of them with 15 or more kills apiece. Another 305 gunners were also recognized as aces.

After victory in Europe, 8th AF Headquarters was reassigned to Sakugawa (Kadena Airfield), Okinawa, under the command of Lieutenant General James H. Doolittle. Tasked with organizing and training new bomber groups for the planned invasion of Japan, the 8th received its first B-29 Superfortress on August 8. Seven days later, the war in the Pacific had come to an end.

With the onset of the jet age, the 8th Air Force moved to Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts on June 13, 1955, the second of three Numbered Air Forces of the newly constituted Strategic Air Command (SAC).

Since then, the Mighty 8th has been called on to perform combat missions from Southeast Asia to the Middle East to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, flying out of its current headquarters at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana.

If you're ever in Savannah, do yourself a favor and pay a visit to the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force (<http://www.mightyeighth.org/>). Not only will you experience an incredible story well told, but you will meet some 90+ year old veterans who walk as straight and tall today as they did, 75 years ago. Happy Birthday, Mighty Eighth.

Submitted by Bruce Monkman with Comments by Ed Reynolds

Douglas DC-3 - A short history

By Peggy Jean Bassett



"Welcome aboard." That's how each person is greeted upon boarding this fine aircraft, now a DC-3 once again. The lettering on the plane reads: "Thunderbird Flying Service". It is operated by "Wings of Valor", a warbird rides experience. How courteous and nostalgic, like times of yesteryears. You can actually view the plane before boarding and enjoy its magnificent exterior with the wing span of 95' from tip to tip. It is a medium range airliner of 64'6" length. It rolled off the assembly line in 1941, destined for TWA Airlines. Instead, it was headed to the U.S. Army, and re-designated as a C-53D-FO 42-68738—and assigned to the War in Europe. Dropping paratroopers over Sicily and then thundering over Normandy on D-Day.

Imagine that, this actual C-53. Belonging to 62nd Troop Carrier Squadron and dropping troops over the Netherlands during the Operation Market Garden in 1944 (an unsuccessful allied military operation).

Note: The Douglas C-53 Skytrooper was a dedicated troop transporter developed from the DC-3 airliner. It was thus very similar to the C-47 Skytrain, but without the reinforced cargo floor, large cargo door and hoist attachment of that dual purpose aircraft. As a result the C-53 was much less flexible in operation than the C-47, and only 380 were built.

After the war the aircraft went into service with TWA until the 1950's, then onto a Skydiving Company operation for another 15 years. Next some private owners took it over and didn't take care of it. The plane was located, found in deplorable condition. The engines, Pratt and Whitney R-1830 twin wasps were still functional. It was then flown to Thun Field, a small public airport in South Hill, Washington to begin restoration. During the restoration, Eric Thun discovered the names of twenty GI's signed in pencil on the skin of the interior between the frames. He took photos before covering them with insulation and the interior skin. The restoration was completed in three years. The name, "Thunderbird Flying Service" was added to the exterior to honor Eric Thun's father's company who had owned Thun Field. In 2013 "Wings of Valor" acquired the plane.

My adventure (Peggy's) began on December 29th last year, with a flight out of Riverside Airport called "Christmas Lights DC-3 flight experience", flying low at 1,000 feet above ground level and about one hour of pure delight. It was amazing and from the firing up of the two twin Wasp 1830's and revving up on the runway for takeoff. My heart was racing almost as fast. With only 18 passengers on a flight (seating for 28 to 32) there was plenty of room to roam and explore the plane and even visit the cockpit in flight.

After the landing, we were invited to visit the pilots, to ask questions and take photos. It was a grand experience of flying in the "Gooneybird" as she was affectionately called. I call her "The Bird of Paradise", a fine, fine old soldier.

By reporter and flyer Peggy Jean Bassett

DC-3 Footnote

Total production of all variants was 16,079. Production was as follows:

- 607 civil variants of the DC-3;
- 10,048 military C-47 and C-53 derivatives were built at Santa Monica, Long Beach, and Oklahoma City;
- 4,937 were built under license in the Soviet Union (1939-1950) as the Lisunov Li-2 (NATO reporting name: Cab);
- 487 Mitsubishi Kinsei-engined aircraft were built by Showa and Nakajima in Japan (1939-1945), as the L2D Type 0 transport (Allied codename Tabby).

The DC-3 converted to a military transport (C-47, 53 etc.) was one of the four pieces of equipment that General Eisenhower said had won the war. The others were the bulldozer, jeep, and 2 1/2-ton truck.

Today it is estimated that there are less than 150 DC-3s in flightworthy condition worldwide.

In Memorial

We lost two faithful members of Wings Over Wendy's in January.

Al Olivari

March 17, 1918 – January 5, 2017



Al Olivari was one of the long time members but had fallen into poor health and passed away a few months short of his 99th birthday. He served on B-17 as a Togglier in the 8th AF during WWII.

Hugh Stevens

February 28, 1923 – January 11, 2017



Hugh Stevens had been a regular attendee right up to December 2016. Hugh served as a Radio & Radar Instructor in the 468th Bomb Group, 20th Air Force in the China Theater. His son Chip drove him to Wendy's every Monday. Hugh will be missed.

REMINDERS

Food drive is Monday, Feb 6, 2017

New Members

We welcomed the following new members during the month of January:

Skip DeYoung

February Birthdays

Bradley Gerber	February 02, 2001
Richard Raskoff	February 04, 1938
Mort Green	February 06, 1933
Alice Stone	February 08, 1924
Johnathan Dutcher	February 09, 1992
Richard Ruby	February 10, 1930
Benjamine Levine	February 11, 1925
Leon Frank	February 11, 1923
John Cromwell	February 12, 1942
David Alvarez	February 13, 1947
Karl Florine	February 15, 1951
Thomas Derango	February 16, 1926
Ed Barkett	February 18, 1957
Phil Shapiro	February 24, 1935
Paul Boghossian	February 27, 1947
Boyd Davis	February 28, 1946
Ira Kanarek	February 28, 1919
Gary Demaio	February 29, 1948

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Alternate Publishers:	Neil Baliber & Fred Kaplan
Editor:	Judy Reynolds
Reporters:	Ray Rosenbaum Ed Moreno Peggy Jean Bassett
Photographers:	Harlis Brend Mike LaVere Howard Swerdlick Ed Reynolds
New Members:	Marion Lovelace Shirley Andrews
Reminders:	Connie Hein

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The following is a list of WOW members who have contributed \$10 to fund the publication of the Wings News for 12 months.

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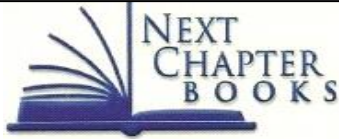
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