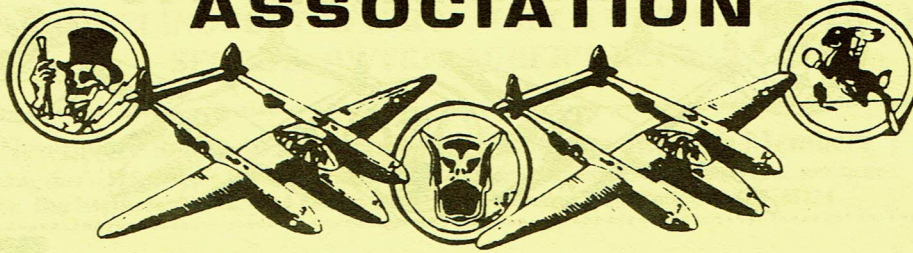


82ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

November 5, 2003

ISSUE 59

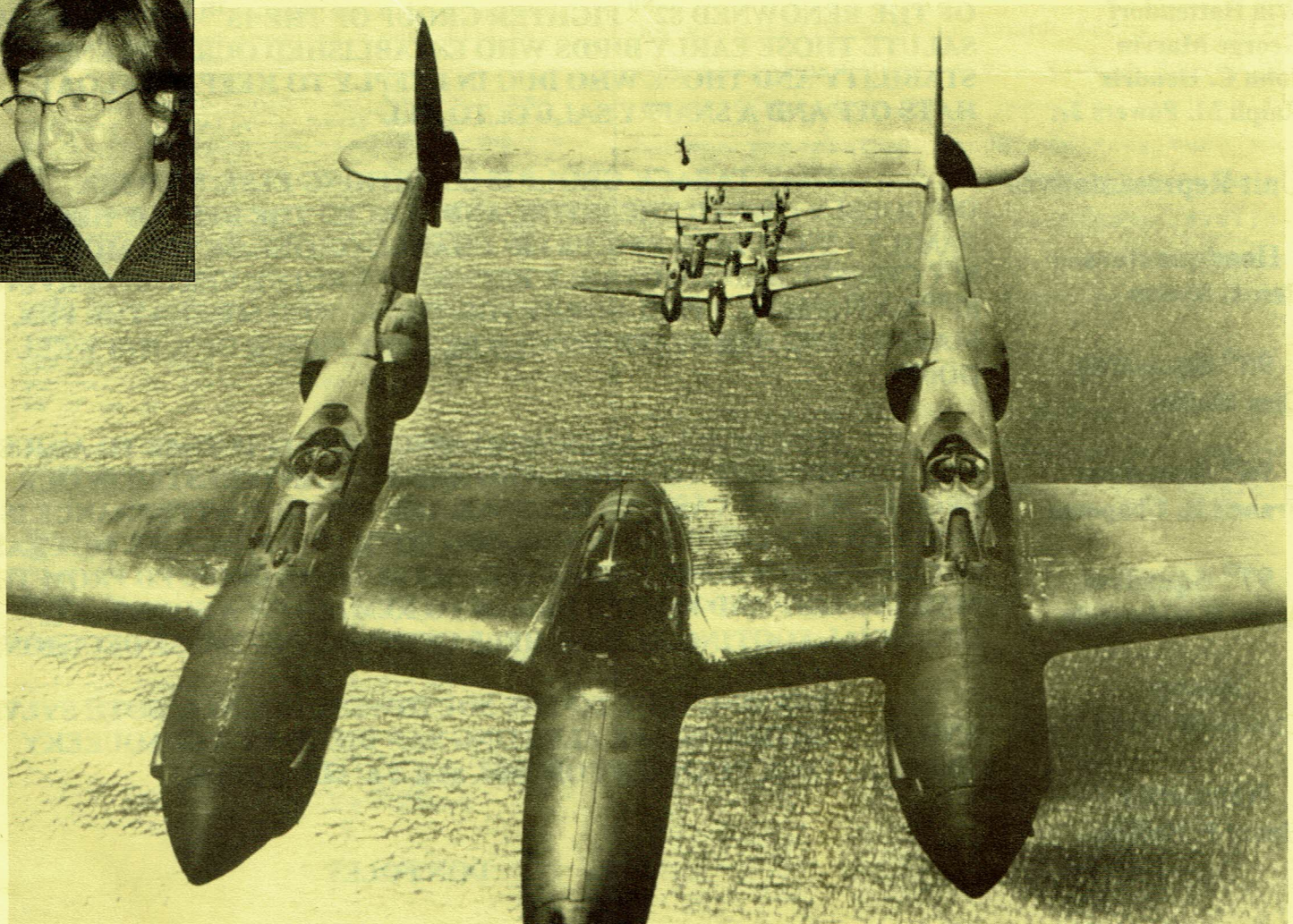
SPECIAL IN THIS ISSUE:

Photos of the 82nd FG's 22 Reunion

Previews of coming Reunions

P-38's Blackest Mission [Magazine Account]

Marsha Taback — Director and Hostess of our 22nd Reunion



82ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION



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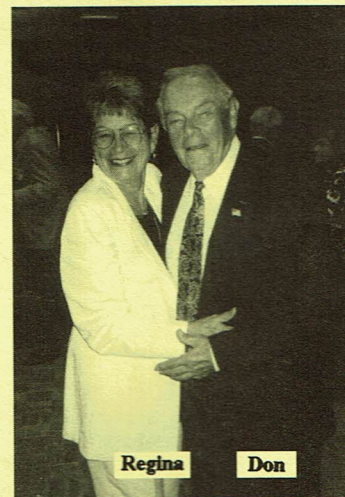
George Marvin

John C. Hendrix

Ralph M. Powers Jr.

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Our new President and First Lady



QUITE A PRIVILEGE TO LINE UP BEHIND FORMER LEADERS OF THE RENOWNED 82ND FIGHTER GROUP OF THE 15TH AIR FORCE. WE SALUTE THOSE EARLY BIRDS WHO ESTABLISHED OUR PRESENCE AND STABILITY AND THOSE WHO DUG IN DEEPLY TO KEEP IT AFLOAT. HATS OFF AND A SNAPPY SALUTE TO ALL

Unit Representatives

Headquarters

Ben A. Mason

95th Squadron

Olen Medley

96th Squadron

Francis H. Chapman

97th Squadron

Alvah J. Deforge Jr.

THAT TABACK GROUP IS SOMETHING ELSE. MARSHA OBVIOUSLY OWNED THE HOTEL AND PLACED THE REST OF HER FAMILY (INCLUDING PINCUS) IN CHARGE OF ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND ENJOYABLE REUNIONS FOR THE VERY DESERVING 82ND GATHERING. I FEEL SORRY FOR THOSE WHO MISSED THE FUN. MARSHA AND HER STAFF SHOULD BE VERY PROUD OF A JOB WELL DONE

NOT REALLY A SURVIVAL ISSUE, BUT IT IS TIME TO ADJUST OUR MEMBERSHIP TO THOSE WHO ARE STILL INTERESTED IN OUR PROGRAMS. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, THE REUNION ATTENDANCE IS SYSTEMATICALLY DROPPING ALONG WITH OUR FINANCES. NOT EASY DECISIONS, BUT SOME NAMES WILL HAVE TO BE DROPPED FROM THE MAILING LIST AND ROSTER FOR US TO REMAIN ON A SOUND FINANCIAL FOOTING. PLEASE HELP US IN MAKING THESE DECISIONS.

Roster

Charles W. Luke

Newsletter

Henry P. Phillips

TURNING NOW TO THE SOUTHWEST CORNER, BOTH SYLVIA AND DICK OSTRONIK ARE ALERTING SAN DIEGO OF THE SQUEEKY KNEES ATTACK PLANNED FOR 2004. SEE YA' ALL THERE

DON FOLEY

\$\$\$ DUES ARE DELINQUENT AFTER 31 MARCH OF THE CURRENT YEAR \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$
SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

[Newsletter is free to all Sustaining, Honorary and Life Members]

Current Sustaining dues - \$15 per year, Life membership is \$100, Associate Members - \$10 voluntary (incl. newsletter).

Send checks to: Roy Norris, Sec/Treas., 82nd Ftr. Gp. Assn., 6636 Plantation Way, Cincinnati, OH 45224

82ND FIGHTER GROUP
ASSOCIATION



October 2, 2003

Executive Board, Et Als.

The Reunion 2003, Hartford, CT. has been accomplished and very much enjoyed by all. Enclosed is a copy of the letter I sent to the Hilton Garden Inn, in appreciation of their overwhelming cooperation.

the finances have been recorded and a copy sent to the Chairperson Marsha for approval. If and when approved a copy will be in the Nov. newsletter.

The association concern for the continued decrease in available funds was boosted by \$3,451.00 in donations received during the reunion.

A suggestion has been made to send a self addressed post card to those members who have not paid dues in the last five years. The count is 58 members @ \$15.00 per year dues equals \$870.00 per year. The cost to mail and receive the return post card is \$65.04. If only seven return willing to pay annual dues, we will have recovered our mailing cost. Please review and inform me of go or no go?

Dues and donation will take considerable space but new members and addresses are necessary.

New Members

Carhart, Nathaniel	31 Rustlewood Ridge Florence, MA 01062 97H
Fine, Delia (Hattendorf)	60 Westover Rd. Stamford, CT 06902 95H
Hamric, Terry K.	105 Rockland ST. Dartmouth, MA 02748 XXA
Koffman, Edward I.	13 Daniels Ct. 96A
Korea 96th Sdrn.	Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Respectfully Submitted,

Roy E. Norris

Letter of Appreciation

6636 Plantation Way
Cincinnati, OH 45224
Sep. 26, 2003

Hilton Garden Inn
555 Corporate Dr.
Windsor, CT 06095

The 82nd Fighter Group Association thanks you for all the attention that it received before, during and after the Reunion 2003.

We especially wish to thank Terry Nicholoy the Catering Director and Vickie Maryou the Sales Director. Their constant availability to the association needs was very much appreciated. The private breakfast room was a tremendous beginning to each day. Availability of the Hospitality Room for our usual need to meet and greet other members was very adequate.

All our requests for changes were met cheerfully and adequately. The banquet was very well prepared and the service very efficient. The food was excellent!

Thank all members of the Hilton Garden Inn staff for us.

Secretary/Treasurer

Roy E. Norris
Roy E. Norris

Many thanks to: Phil, Marsha, and Steve Taback for all the hard work and a very successful, 2003 REUNION.

As the month of October comes to an end, visitor numbers at the, 82nd Fighter Group website will be, approximately 27, 500. The 1st Anniversary of the 82nd FG website is, Nov. 28th.

Total number of visitors for the first year will be approximately: 30,000 from over 45 countries.

Remember, if you don't have access to a computer, go to your local library. Tell them to lookup the, 82nd Fighter Group website. They should be happy to assist you.

Information needed for the website, is an ongoing request. Photos and/or photo negatives, travel / promotion orders, rosters, reports, logbooks, diaries, newspaper / magazine articles, gun camera film, etc. Anything and everything that is paper, is needed for the website. Our contact information, is listed in the, ASSN. roster.

Many thanks to the members, that brought items for the website, to the REUNION. It is greatly appreciated.

The list of family members, wanting and needing information, about 82nd FG members, continues to grow. The follow is an updated list of 82nd FG members, that have family members searching for information:

95th - Ernest K. Osher, Ernest L. Anderson, Wilburn R. Brookman, Thomas D. Hodgson, Clifford V. Lord, Richard L. Hattendorf, Carl Hendrix, Paul J. Lehocky, Benjamin R. Liss, Francis M. Molloy, Donald N. Pollock.

96th - Rudell Coursey, Howell B. Coates, Franklin Domingo Rogero, Fred A. Selle, Warren L. Singer, Robert M. Gongos, Glen B. Moyes.

97th - Conrad F. Bentzlin, William W. Dana.

Please contact Terry, for, additional family member, contact information.

Until next time. All our thoughts and best wishes.

Terry & Cindy Massick

From Steve Blake

xxa

Hi Monty -

Thanks for the copy of your trip log - very interesting!

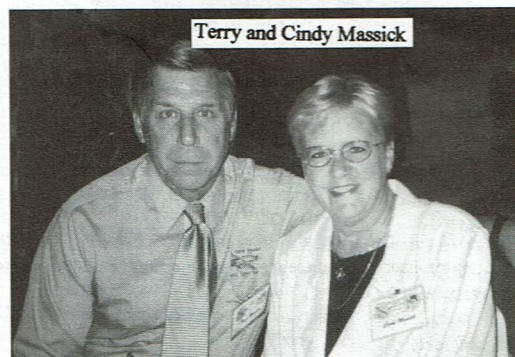
As to next year's P-38 Convention (not Reunion, as we want to attract and invite the general public), the final plans for it have just been made. Very soon we will be sending out convention notices to various publications and organizations, including the 82nd FG Association.

In any event, the dates will be May 12 through 16 and the location Ontario, CA. The convention will be held in conjunction with the big annual Chino (Planes of Fame) air show, at which our people will be given VIP treatment, with special parking, our own pavilion, etc. The Planes of Fame's P-38, "Porky II" (formerly "Joltin' Josie"), will be prominently featured, in the air and on the ground.

Needless to say, I am looking forward to the convention, and then to the 82nd's reunion in San Diego later in the year. 2004 should be a memorable year!

I have been discussing with Jake plans/ideas for the reprint of ADORIMINI. I think it is a very feasible project, if done properly.

Best wishes,



Son mari est tombé à La Ciotat en 1944

L'émouvant hommage de la veuve du pilote



Près de soixante ans après la mort de son mari, Jim Riley, un pilote américain abattu lors d'un combat au-dessus de la baie de La Ciotat en 1944, son épouse, Jean a enfin pu, hier, se recueillir sur les lieux du drame. Durant plusieurs décennies, cette Américaine avait cru que l'avion de son mari avait explosé en vol quelque part en Provence. Ce sont des plongeurs provençaux qui ont retrouvé l'épave de l'appareil et ont réussi à l'identifier.

Photo Patrice MAGNIEN
Page 28, l'article d'Hervé VAUDOIT

Dear Roy,

I want to let you know I returned from France on May 24, 2003, after two of the most incredible weeks of my life – and the part you, Hank Philips and Walter Carper played in this story.

I have enclosed two of the Richmond, Virginia newspapers and copies of two newspapers from France – *La Provence*, based in Marseille, and the other paper from Cannes.

I wore the little P-38 you gave me last October at all times. And as you'll read in one article "From Jean to Jim," I gave the medallion you gave me to Philippe. I have kept it in my purse since you gave it to me. He was thrilled. He related to every detail on both sides of the coin. Could he have also said it was a P-38G, the model Jim flew? It was an emotional farewell. He had a very small coin in his billfold that he said saved his life. I don't know the full story other than it was a 'Heads or Tails' choice. He knows your name, that you gave me the little P-38 I wore, the 82nd Group and that you are the man who put me in touch with Sheril Huff. I was so glad he did not already have the coin from his 20 year association with WWII pilots and veterans associations. He is considered the world expert on American WWII plane crashes.

Philippe Castellano is the deep-sea diver who raised my husband's plane from the Bay of LaCiotat (southern France) in 1997. Jim was shot down January 27, 1944. Philippe and I corresponded continually since October – a wonderful learning process and preparation for this trip. He and his friends and "The Team" did everything in the world to make our (my daughter and me) trip wonderful beyond words. Of course, sad, but happy to have answers after all these years.

I want you to know also, I read every word eagerly of the 82nd Group newsletters. I am honored to be an honorary member. My heart is mainly with the 49th Fighter Squadron now, but a large part will always be with the 82nd!

Many thanks and love,

Jean

Jean Riley Martin
3531 Musket Drive
Midlothian, VA 23113

From Francis 'Chappy' Chapman

96th

Hi Hank,

I have been waiting to write until I saw my Dr. and he had some x-rays to take. I still have a ways to go for my hip to heal completely and he advised me not to take any long trips. I will not be able to attend the 2003 82nd Reunion.

I would like to thank all of you for the many cards and phone calls that I have received. I am sorry that I cant attend the Fall Reunion, I will concentrate on recuperating and getting well enough to attend the Reunion in 2004 with the Ostronik's.

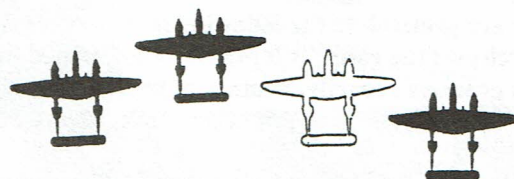
I would still like to continue as the 96th Squadron Representative.

We have had one of the best weather years ever in 2003, we hope it continues.

I will call you later,

Chappy

FLY BY of HONOR



Missing plane formation for recently departed Heroes and Courageous Ladies of the 82nd.

**	**	**	**	**	**	*
Rex Curtis				30 Sept.,02		95 th
Andy Blakely				06 Aug.,03		96 th
Robert L. Carter				10 Oct.,03		97 th
Derrill M. Rodgers				21 Oct.,03		96 th

From Louise Blakley

96H

To the 82nd Fighter Group 8-24-03
my husband Andrew M. Blakley
passed away 8-6-03. The last reunion
we were able to attend was Calabasas
Springs. He battled Parkinson's the
past ten years. The disease not
only destroyed his body, but his mind
also. As long as he could talk he
praised the Air Force and the
P-38. I wish we could have
been at more reunions. we
enjoyed being with the great group
of people that you all are -
our very best to all of you
Louise Blakley

Hartford Reunion Banquet and Dance Friday evening, 19 September 2003 Marsha and Steve Taback, Hosts

We are grateful to the following members for the production and content of these scenes: Ben Mason, who as always, purchased the roses; Bill Mason, who assisted in passing them to the ladies and above all, Colonel Wolfgang Asmus. His gracious, courtly, manner of presentation, transformed the ladies at each table into a queen for the evening. Full honors also go to Sylvia Ostronik, Monty Powers and Chuck Luke for the creation of these fine photos.

bp

Table One

Omitted

Table Two

Monty and Margaret Powers 95th
Del and Mary Ryland 95th
Edward and Shirley Koffman 96A



Fern Morgan

Table five

Meredith Embrey 95H
Monte and Theresa Commons xxa
Fern Morgan 97H
Lute Thompson 96th
Majie Failey Guest



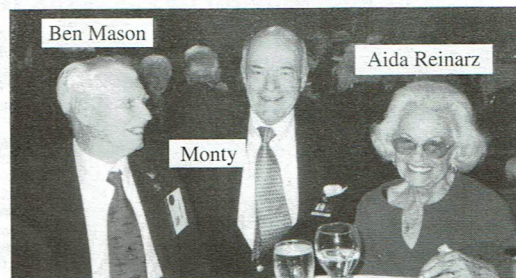
Meredith

Table Six

George Rivest 97th
Grace Davidson Guest
Mel and Lois Roalsvig 97th
Roy and JoAnn Norris 96th
Chip Norris 96H
George Marvin 97th



Lute and Majie



Ben Mason

Aida Reinarz

Monty

Table Seven

Wolfgang Asmus 97A
Benjamin Asmus [Son] Guest
Ben Mason Hq
Aida Reinarz HqH
Bill and Pam Mason HqH
Dick and Sylvia Ostronik 96th



Bill Mason

Mary Ryland

Wolfgang Asmus

Table Three

Jim and Lorraine Clift xxa
Dick and Zeta Gadbury 97th
Guy and Phyllis Otto 97th
Whitie and Lou Ellison 97th



Gene

Megan

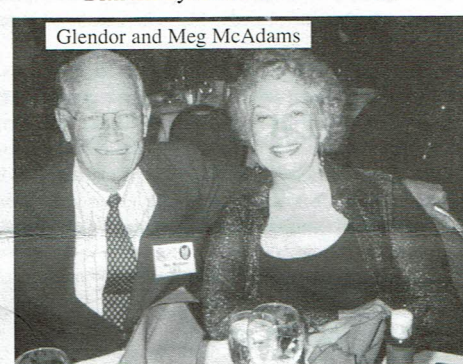
Table Four

Hank and Marlene Phillips 96th
Georg and Lilo Fuereder xxa
Megan Brewer Guest
Gene and Phyllis Sidwell 95th
John and Francis Kane 96th



Marlene P.

Jan Babincak



Glendor and Meg McAdams

Table Eight

Chuck and Judy Luke 97th
Glendor and Meg McAdams 97th
Gordon and Kaki Fuqua 97th
Al and Claire Deforge 97th



Lois Roalsvig



Delia Fine

Wolf



Betty Medley

Sheryl

Lola

Table Nine

Lola Gierzt
Olen and Betty medley 95th
Will Hattendorf 95th
Delia Fine [Dau.] uest
Bill and Sheila Hattendorf [Son] 95th
Jake Hendrix

Table Ten

Don and Regina Foley 97th
 Lincoln and Midge Jones 96th
 Terry and Cindy Massick 95H
 Bob and Pat Carpenter 95th



Midge

Lincoln

Table Eleven

Charley and Bette Pinson 96th
 Bill and Ellie Burgess 96th
 Ruth Donohoo 96H
 Bernie Craft 95th
 Cheryl Northcutt [Dau] Guest
 Kathy Rockey 95H

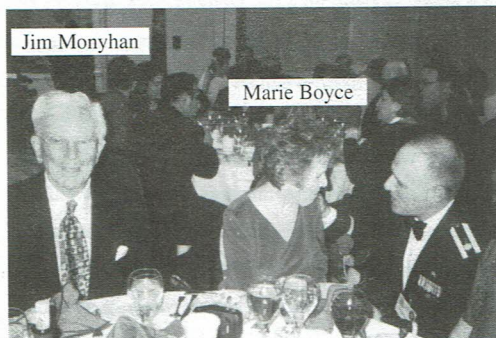


Ruth

Bette

Table Twelve

Paul and Arkie Harmon 96th
 Ros and Lil Harding 96th
 Gene and Bettye Russell 96th
 Jim Monyhan 96th
 Marie Boyce Guest



Jim Monyhan

Marie Boyce



Gene and Bettye Russell

Mary Swosowski

Gina, Montalto



Table Thirteen

John and Mary Swosowski 97th Guests
 Judy Padula Guest
 Montalto Family Guests
 Karen, Philip, Gina, Mathew



Susan

Evan

Table Fourteen

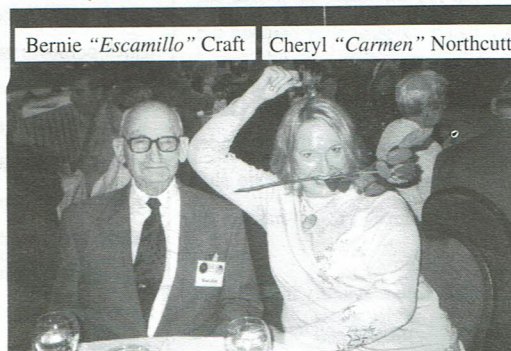
Steve and Marsha Taback 97H
 Evan, Susan, Tracy Taback Guests
 Bill and Joyce Doerr Guests
 Amy Patterson Guest



Lillian and Ros Harding

Table Fifteen

0
 Len and Eloise Kuczsmarski 96th
 Jim Harrison Guest
 Joe and Mary Solko 95th
 Jerry and June Cavanaugh 95th

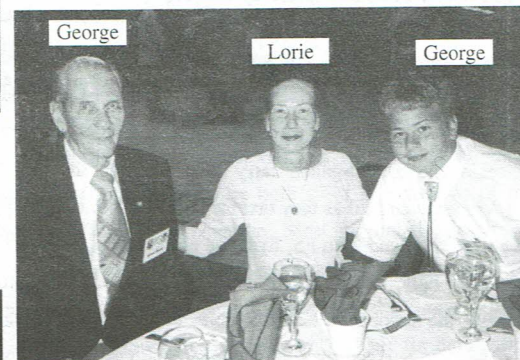


Bernie "Escamillo" Craft

Cheryl "Carmen" Northcutt

Table Sixteen

George & Lorie Bowers [Dau] 95th
 George Rogers [gr/son] est
 Bill Hayduk 95th
 Jan Babincak xxa
 Jan Babincak II [son] Guest
 Clayton & Bev Tillapaugh 96th



George

Lorie

George



Beverly and "Tillie" Tillapaugh



Al and Claire Deforge



Judy Luke



Bill and Ellie Burgess

Magazine: F1203

ARTICLE: THE P-38'S BLACKEST DAY: JUNE 10, 1944

AUTHOR: Thomas McKelvey Cleaver

Dawn: June 10, 1944 The great complex of air bases near Foggia, Italy, bustles with activity as the sun rises. Forty-six 82nd FG Lockheed P-38J Lightnings from the 95th, 96th, and 97th FS, each carrying a 1000-pound bomb on the right wing shackle and a 310-gallon ferry drop tank on the left, shake the Foggia No. 11/Vincenzo airfield as they taxi for takeoff. Over the Adriatic, 48 1st FG P-38Js of the 27th, 71st and 94th FS, flying as escorts, will join them. One after another over southern Italy, nearly 100 P-38s take wing and climb to altitude. Their target: Ploesti, the major oil refinery complex in Europe, more than 600 miles away across the Adriatic Sea and over the mountains of Yugoslavia. The mission: to dive-bomb the Romano-Americano oil refinery, the major producer of high-grade aviation gasoline for the Luftwaffe. It will be recorded as the blackest day in the history of the American fighter forces in WW II.

For Germany, access to and control of oil supplies was crucial for victory. Modern warfare ran on an ocean of oil, and there was none in Germany. The synthetic fuel industry—based on the extensive German coal deposits—could provide some petroleum products, but for warfare on the scale envisioned in Hitler's plans, control of major oil resources was of maximum importance. Conversely, destruction of German oil supplies would lead to military defeat faster than the destruction of any other strategic target.

The largest oil fields in Europe were found in Romania, at the western end of the Caspian Sea Basin—now known to hold the largest proven oil reserves on the planet. In 1939 and 1940, as Europe went to war, Romania remained neutral, as it had in WW I. Following the fall of Poland, the Soviet Union took Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania. While the British dithered over an alliance with a nation now run by the fascist government of Gen. Ion Antonescu, the Germans romanced the Rumanians with every gift they could think of. On October 12, 1940, Luftwaffe fighter squadrons arrived to provide air defense for the oil fields around Ploesti, and Romania joined the Axis on November 23; Hitler had secured his oil supply.

The Allies were well aware that if Ploesti could be knocked out, the German war machine would soon grind to a halt. The problem was the oil fields were out of range. It was only after the Allies gained control of North Africa in the summer of 1943 that Ploesti came within range, and even then it was a stretch.

On August 1, 1943, the American Ninth Air Force launched Operation *Tidal Wave*, a strike by B-24s flying from Libya to Romania. Although the raid was spotted by German radar, the low level attack caught the defenders off guard; the Rumanian and German air defenders only spotted the attackers as they bombed the oil refineries.

In an hour-long savage battle, 36 of 130 B-24s were shot down—10 by Rumanian Bf 109Gs and IAR 80 fighters, seven by the Luftwaffe and the remainder by flak. Numerous other Liberators were so badly damaged that they were shot down over Bulgaria and Greece, crashed into the Mediterranean or crashed on landing back in Libya.

Tidal Wave was declared a success, but it was a short-lived victory inasmuch as the Ploesti oil refineries were only moderately damaged, with production resuming within a few weeks. More importantly, the joint Rumanian-German air defense was

reorganized and reinforced. The next round would be even more difficult, particularly when *Oberst* Eduard Neumann—formerly *Kommodore* of JG 27 in North Africa—was named commander of the defending German and Rumanian fighters in March 1944.

By April 1944, the USAAF had bases for B-17s and B-24s around Foggia, Italy—the 15th Air Force had been created the previous November as the MTO equivalent of the 8th AF. With the P-51 Mustang only starting to replace the Spitfires of the 31st and 52nd Fighter Groups as well as the P-47s of the 325th FG, the P-38-equipped 1st, 14th and 82nd Fighter Groups were the most experienced long-range bomber escorts in the command.

The campaign against Ploesti reopened on April 5, 1944, when 91 German and 81 Rumanian fighters scrambled against the American bombers hitting Ploesti and claimed 14, close to the nine B-24s and two B-17s admitted by the USAAF.

As the Soviet armies closed in from the northeast, the Rumanians had to send the experienced pilots of *Grupul 7 Vanatoare*—the Bf 109-equipped 7th Fighter Group—to meet this threat. The primary defense of Ploesti was now the responsibility *Grupul 6*, equipped with IAR 80/81 fighters; *Grupul 1* with Bf 109s occasionally joined them. In total, the defenders had no more than 30 Bf 109s and 70 IAR 80.

The IAR 80—the only domestically-designed Rumanian fighter to see service during the War—was thoroughly obsolete when compared to the P-51 Mustangs and P-38 Lightnings flown by their American opponents. However, the cannon-armed IAR 81C was particularly effective against the bombers, and in the eight raids flown against Ploesti between April 5 and June 6, 1944, the bombers averaged an unacceptably-heavy seven percent loss rate.

Because of the tenacity of the defense and the effectiveness of the smoke generators based around the oil fields, the most valuable target—the Romano-Americano Oil Refinery—had escaped serious damage. It was too important to leave alone; something different had to be tried in the effort to knock out the refinery.

Among the pilots of the 96th Fighter Squadron detailed for the attack on Romano-Americano was Capt. Richard "Dick" Willsie, the Squadron Operations Officer, and an experienced pilot with more than 40 missions under his belt.

"For whatever reason, that refinery led a charmed life," he recalled. "So some bright guy at headquarters decided since the heavies couldn't hit it from 25,000 feet, that we were going to dive-bomb it from 10,000 feet. We had been practicing this on an island off the Italian coast for a week, and felt we were good enough at it that we had a chance of being successful." Willsie by that time had been flying with the 82nd for nearly a year, and was the senior man in the squadron in missions flown.

"There were forty-six of us with bombs, and forty-eight P-38 escorts from the First Fighter Group," Willsie explained. "The strategy was we would join up while crossing the Adriatic and fly over Yugoslavia until we got to the mountains, at which point we would go into Romania on the deck—and I mean we were to remain at 50 to 100 feet altitude when we came out of the mountains."

Low-level formation flying is difficult under the best circumstances, let alone when two three-squadron formations are flying on the deck under radio silence for two-and-a-half hours. Unfortunately for the Americans, the German air defense radars had spotted them over Yugoslavia before they entered Rumanian airspace. This negated the value of the difficult low-level penetration, since they had lost the element of surprise. To cap things off, shortly after coming out of the mountains, the two groups became separated. The groups accelerated into their attack as they punched off their drop tanks over the farm fields.

With the radar reports now definite in regards to the American attack, Luftwaffe *Oberst* Neumann and his assistant controller, *Capitan Comandor Aviator* Gheorghe Miculescu of the Rumanian Air Force, scrambled their defenders as the P-38s spread out over the Rumanian plain. At this point, the Germans—having identified the attackers as *jabos*—were expecting an attack on their airfields. All operational IAR 80s of *Grupul 6*—led by top IAR 80 ace *Capitan Aviator* Dan Vizante (15 kills)—lifted off Popesti-Leordeni airfield and clawed for altitude while the Bf 109Gs of *Grupul 7* flew back from the Russian Front and the Messerschmitts of I/JG 53 and III/JG 77 rose from Pipera airbase near Bucharest. Among the scrambling Luftwaffe *experten* were I/JG 53 *Gruppenkommandeur* Knight's Cross holder Maj. Jürgen Harder (64 victories), *Leutnant* Rupert Weninger, *Leutnant* Erich Gehring and *Unteroffizier* Willi Dreyer, each of whom would raise their scores this day.

Within minutes, *Capitan* Vizante and *Grupul 6* were in position. Moments later, the P-38s of the 1st Fighter Group passed Popesti-Leordeni airfield and spotted four Do.217s attempting to land. Three flights of the 71st Fighter Squadron broke off to attack these aircraft. Moments later, they were bounced by the diving IAR 80s of *Grupul 6*. Four P-38s went down in the first pass as the others salvoed their drop tanks and tried to turn with the enemy. All the advantages the heavy P-38 had over the lighter IAR 80 were cancelled out in dogfights waged at altitudes between 100 and 300 feet.

This battle occurred in a shallow valley filled with more than 40 aircraft. Airplanes fought an erratic combat—attacking while trying to avoid each other and the ground. Many were unsuccessful. An indication of how hot the battle was is the fact that two P-38s went down when they snagged the ground with their wingtips, while two IAR 80s collided over the field and several others were hit by their own defensive ground fire.

In the four-minute battle, the 23 Rumanian pilots who made the interception claimed 23 P-38s for a loss of two of their own. The P-38s of the 71st Fighter Squadron suffered the highest casualties, losing 9 of 16 pilots while 2nd Lt. Herbert “Stub” Hatch Jr.—element lead for Cragmore Green flight—managed to shoot down five IAR 80s. These were the only Rumanian losses of the day, and made him one of few P-38 “aces in a day.” *Capitan Aviator* Dan Vizante added two P-38s to his score to solidify his position as top IAR 80 ace of the Rumanian Air Force. Of 23 P-38s claimed by the Rumanians, the 1st F.G. lost a total of 14, with numerous others crippled.

The P-38s of the 1st F.G., thoroughly routed by this effective interception, played no further part in the mission as the surviving pilots limped back to Italy. The battle over Popesti-Leordeni would mark the high point of resistance by the Rumanian Air Force to the fighters of the 15th Air Force.

Not knowing the battle was underway and still right on the deck, the men of the 82nd overflew Pipera airbase as they approached Ploesti, looking for their missing escorts. Past the field, they began their climb to altitude to make the attack. At that moment, they were struck by the 40 Bf 109Gs of *Grupul 7*, I/JG 53 and III/JG 77.

“It was as though the roof fell in on us,” Willsie recalls. “There were Messerschmitts and heavy flak bursts everywhere.” Of the 48 Lightnings in the attack, only 24 were able to drop their bombs on the target, while nine were lost to flak and fighters with another 10 badly damaged. During this combat, one Bf 109G-6 was shot down, killing *Gefreiter* Helmut Köditz when his “White 3” crashed near Brosteni. A second Bf 109G-6 made a successful belly-landing at Horsesti, with minor battle damage.

Lt. Merrill Adelson of 96th FS claimed a Me 210 and He 111 hit while they were

trying to lift off from the Pipera airbase, plus the destruction of an unidentified single-engine fighter. Another 96th FS pilot, Lt. John Sognia, claimed a Bf 109G in the wild fighting over the refinery.

“Unfortunately,” related Willsie, “despite the fact that we hit the cracking plant, a storage tank and three refinery units, the bombing was not effective because of the worst losses suffered during a single mission by American fighters in WW II. The Rumanian claim of 51 American fighters shot down was more than twice the actual loss, but 23 P-38s failed to return to their bases around Foggia. American claims of 33 were also more than double the actual Rumanian loss of 14—only 10 of which were fighters. The high rate of over-claiming by both sides is indicative of the intensity of the battles that raged over Ploesti that day. Most importantly, despite all the sacrifice, the Romano-Americana refinery didn’t suffer any serious damage.

“We pretty much felt like we’d gotten kicked pretty hard that day,” says Willsie. “It took a lot of hard work by the ground crews for us to be ready for the mission we flew the next day.”

Despite the battering of June 10, the 82nd flew support the next day for a B-24 mission to Constanta. The June 11 attacks showed the growing power of the Americans, with the return flight of Operation *Frantic I* (a repeat of the first shuttle raid flown by the 15th Air Force to Russia on June 2), which hit Ploesti with one of the hardest blows, as the B-24s destroyed their target at Constanta.

Within a month of “the blackest day,” the Rumanian Air Force would suffer decisive losses to its leading fighter units, with 56 top pilots killed or wounded.

On August 23, 1944, after nearly continuous raids by the 15th Air Force and major penetration of the country by the Red Army, Romania would unconditionally surrender and then join the Allies in driving the Germans from Eastern Europe.



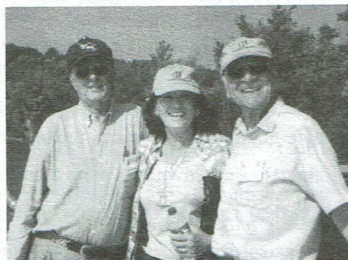
60th Anniversary

Guy and Phyllis Otto are remembering 60 years of love and laughter, dreams and disappointments, success and failures, which all began on Aug. 30, 1943, when Cadet Guy W.

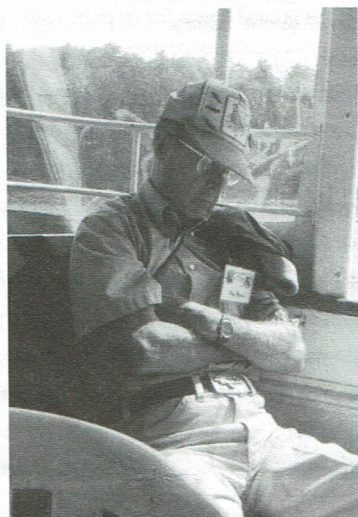
Otto became Air Force 2nd Lt. Otto received his pilots wings, and married his sweetheart Phyllis, in Phoenix, Arizona.

The couple will be celebrating their 60th anniversary with sons, Wayne and his wife Lynne, Kim and his wife Anne, and grandchildren, Lindsay, Bryan and Christina.

Dick, Sylvia Ostronik and Georg Fuereder



Enjoying a pleasant cruise down
The Connecticut River, 20 Sept.



Our able Secretary/Treasure Roy Norris was on the cruise
as well, but obviously doesn't remember much.

I keep telling the 82nd that
we are working this boy too hard, but
as you can see, I have been ignored! *hp*

OSHKOSH IN 2005
IS A GO!

Below is what AAA & each visitor says
about the EAA MUSEUM at Oshkosh it
is a GEM for Reunion 2005!

"....Museum displays a collection of more than
95 full-size aircraft, including home-built sport
planes, gliders, barnstormers, helicopter, racers
and acrobatic planes, as well as antique,
military, solar-powered and ultra-light aircraft.

The Museum also has a multimedia exhibit as
well as models, engines, propellers, components
and cutaways to show structural design.
Airplane rides are available May through
October."

Dick and Sylvia Announce !

**The 82nd FG's 23d Reunion will take place
from 22 - 26 Sept., 2004 in San Diego, Calif.**

The Reunion will be at the Red Lion *Hanalei* Hotel
This luxurious Resort Hotel features extra large rooms with balconies,
refrigerators, microwave ovens and other amenities expected at hotels
of this quality.

The hotel surrounds a large grass and pool area with easy access
adjacent to the Hospitality Room

Dick and Sylvia have not decided on outside activities at this early,
stage, but San Diego offers a host of choices to tempt us.

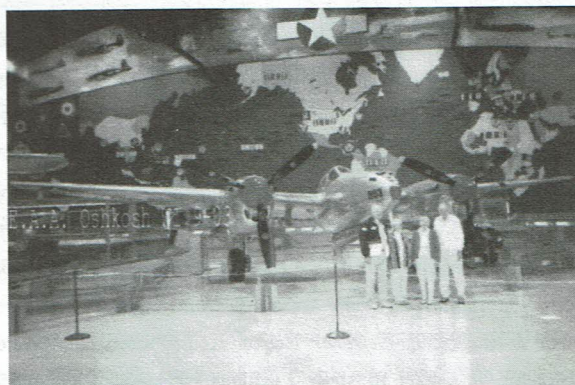
The March Issue of the newsletter will include the complete list of
activities along with golf, transportation info., prices etc.

The March Issue will have the usual "Letter-of-Intent", whereby
Members send their planned, but non-committed, list of activities.
This letter is most important for the Reunion Host in making their
final arrangements. *hp*



Our Hostess Marsha, poses with her golf team, before sending them off to battle
for honors at the Ellington Ridge Country Club.

Left to right are: Will Hattendorf [3d place], Guy Otto, Joe Hanish [Winner],
Bob Carpenter [2nd place],— Marsha [non-player]—, Dick Ostronik, Monty Powers,
Mac McAdams, Chuck Luke, Phil Taback.



Site of 82nd Reunion Banquet, Sept.2005

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Changes since the last newsletter

	*	*	*	*
Bloxam	Removed			95A
Chase, Jim	New member			96H
Evans	Removed			95A
Pratt	Temp. removed			97H
Randall	New address			97 th
Tinker	Temp. removed			97 th

Note:

* Ltr.A after SqN denotes post-war member.
Members wishing to add their names to the above,
notify Hank Phillips or Chuck Luke
{ E-mail preferred }

CHUCK LUKE SENDS:

Italy Tour

Responding to many inquiries as to when the next Italian Tour will take place, Chuck has contacted the travel agency that arranged the Foggia Tour in A.D. 2000.
No plans can be made until Chuck receives an estimate of how many members wish to sign up for the tour. He asks that anyone interested in participating, [not a commitment at this time] to please contact him at 1(206) 898-3820 or via email at Ekul9782@comcast.net
This tour will most likely start at Rome, visiting Central and Northern Italy.

hp