82ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

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NEWSLETTER **March 28, 2005** **ISSUE 63**

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SPECIAL IN THIS ISSUE

Letter of Intent [Insert] 82nd FG's Oshkosh Reunion
8 -9 -10 -September, 2005

Enemy Account of a Ploesti Mission

Phil Taback makes Home Town Headlines { See Page 6 }

Update on the 82nd FG's Web Site

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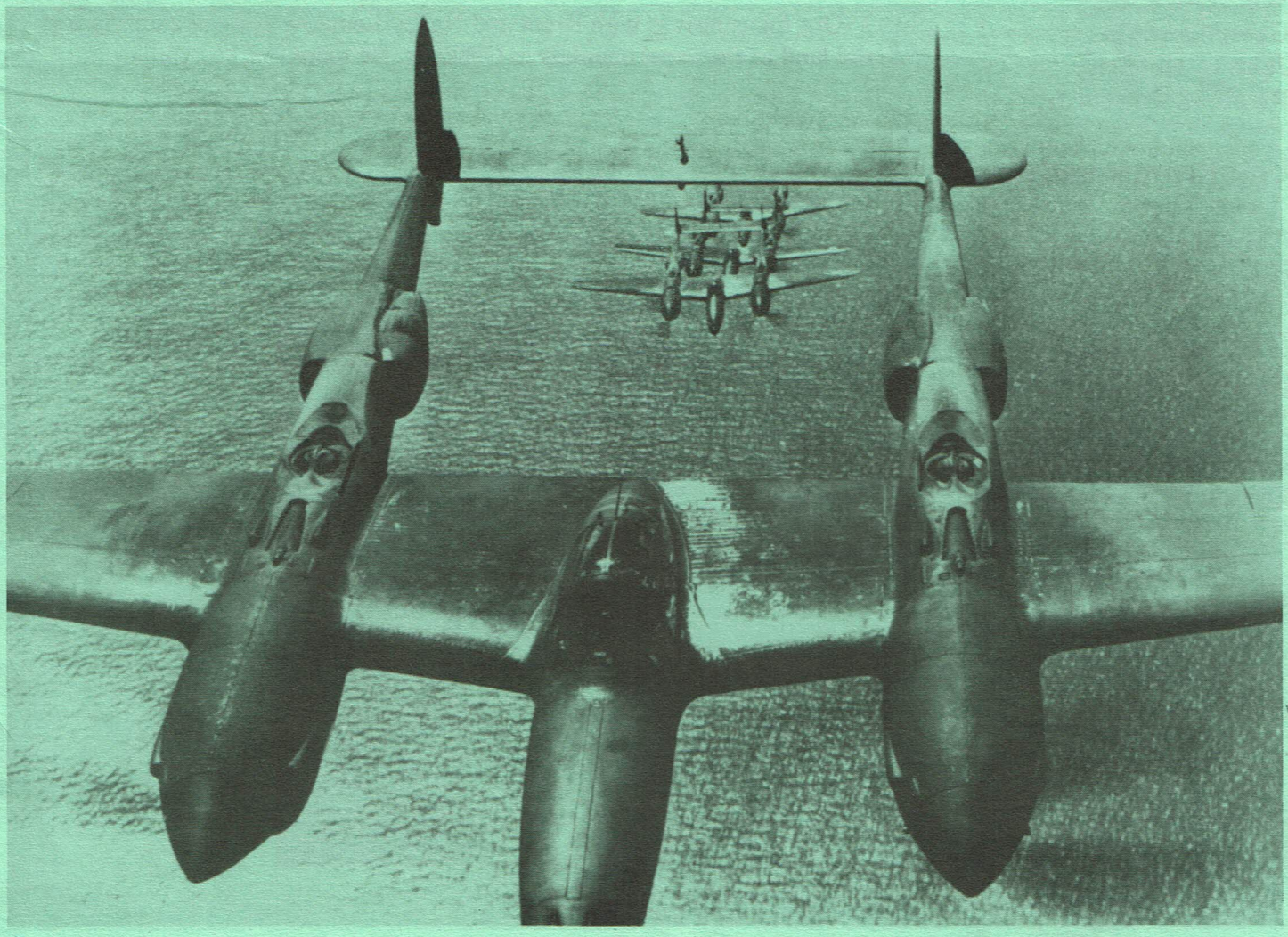

82ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

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96th Squadron
Francis H. Chapman

97th Squadron
Alvah J. Deforge Jr.

Roster
Charles W. Luke

Newsletter
Henry P. Phillips

THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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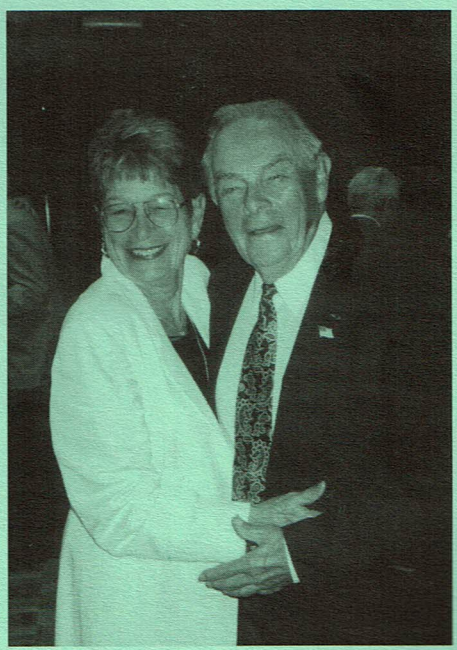
The 82nd, on the ground or in the air; when a distress call goes out the response is overwhelming as we saw at our last general meeting.

Unanimous support and no surprise when the membership responded to the financial issues plaguing our future security. Our Newsletter betters with each mailing. The Web-site continues to add history of all types which draws attention from those who might be disinterested otherwise. Our membership roster is continually up-dated and our overall position is sound. Harley Vaughn would be proud of us.

Our focus now is with Brent and Nancy Leutzow and our exciting trip to the land of the experimentals in Oshkosh. Be there.

Don Foley

Our President and First Lady
Don Regina

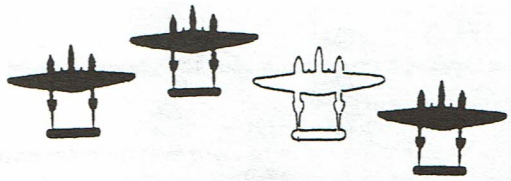


From Bill Mason **HqH**
To Don Foley **97th**

Hi Don,
I talked with Janice Simmons today. She is one of Stumpy's daughters. He passed away peacefully with the family at his side. His wife, Virginia (97) is doing as well as can be expected and there is a lot of family support here in Denver.
There will be a Graveside Memorial Service at twelve noon on Thursday, March 17th
Roy said he sent flowers from the 82ndFGA to Virginia and I'm sure they will be much appreciated and brighten up her quarters at the nursing home.
Janice made a point of expressing to me how much the P-38 and the 82ndFGA meant to Stumpy and also how his family is so grateful to the folks in the 82nd for their love and support over the years.
I will attend the memorial and be honored to represent the 82ndFGA. Dad wants to, but can't come up from Houston at this time,

As always'
Billy Boy

FLY BY of HONOR



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

Robert S. Graffius		*24 Mar.,03*	*95th*
Catherine Barnhart	*[Harley]*	*18 Aug.,03*	*95th*
John England Jr.		*16 Apr.,04*	*97th*
Charles Horne		*08 Oct.,04*	*97th*
Jacques W. "Jack" Howard		*22-Nov.,04*	*96th*
Eugene Jackson		*28 Feb.,03*	*96th*
Hugh Hill Jr.		*?? Oct.,04*	*95th*
Joan Bowers	*[George]*	*15 Dec.,04*	*95H*
Phyllis Grover	*[Arnold]*	*20 Dec.,04*	*96th*
John W. Hulme		*Late Dec.,04*	*95th*
Johnson Williams		*12 Jan.,05*	*97th*
Roland D. Graham		*27 Jan.,05*	*95th*
Richard C, "Stumpy" Hollinger		*08 Mar.,05*	*Hq.*
Peggy Warne	***{Howard}***	***12 Mar..,05***	***97th***

From Mary Howard **96H**
To Ben Mason **Hq**

12/6/04

Dear Ben,

I am addressing this note to you to express my sincere appreciation to the 82nd Fighter Group Association for the beautiful floral arrangement sent for Jack's Memorial Service.

I was quite overwhelmed and utterly delighted.

We shall all miss dear Jack, but I know he is at peace.

Thank you for your thoughtful wish.

Most sincerely,

Mary

JACQUES (JACK) WINFIELD HOWARD, 81, died peacefully at home on Monday, November 22, 2004. Jack was born in Houston on April 14, 1923, son of George F. Howard and Simone M. France Howard. He is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Mary Morgan Howard; his son, Alan D. Howard; and daughter, Mary Elizabeth Howard.

Jack received his earliest education in Tampico, Mexico, followed by schooling in Venezuela and Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a result, he became very fluent in pure Spanish. Jack later attended Sidney Lanier Junior High School in Houston, and Staunton Military Academy in Staunton, Virginia.

Upon graduation, Jack was accepted at O.T.C. at Ft. Benning, Georgia. He was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in June 1942. He later transferred to the United States Air Force and received his flight training and his "Wings." He was assigned to the Mediterranean Theater with the 82nd Fighter Group, part of the 15th Air Force, based in Foggia, Italy. Flying was one of Jack's great loves, and he was enormously proud to be a P-38 pilot with the 82nd Fighter Group. After the war, Jack was associated with the Exxon Corporation for 40 years before retiring in 1982

A memorial service will be held at one o'clock Saturday afternoon, December 4th, in the Jasek Chapel of Geo. H. Lewis & Sons, 1010 Bering Drive. A reception will follow in The Pavilion.

LETTERS from the MEMBERS

(Sometimes abridged)

From Dick Ostronik **96th**

Hi Hank,
A little about the creator of the mannequin, **Andy Corona.** He is a paramedic with the Los Angeles Fire Dept. For years he has been an avid collector of WW2 Army Air Corps memorabilia. His first was crew members of the B-17. I got him interested in including the P-38 flyers. He has been unable to find a backpack type life raft such as we used in our flying gear. He has just about everything else that was used for flying and is still collecting.
His collection also includes several Robert Taylor Lithographs.
His generous loan of the **dressed up flyer** for our hospitality room was a great addition for all to see *Horrido* ----Richard.

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From Verne Yahne **95th**

Hi Hank;
I would like to say Happy 63d Anniversary to all Members of the Class of 42-C and their families. I turn back my memory and say " those were great days with the Great Guys". I miss you all.
Verne Yahne

From Hank Phillips **96th**

Thanks Verne. I was still in school when the **42-C Pilots** received their wings, but it is an honor to have gotten to know so many of them. I'll put your message in NL63, which should get out late this month.
Highest regards,
Hank **(44-C)**

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From Jack Sides **96th**

Subject: Fw: Interesting Historical & Ironic Facts from the USMA1958-Forum

A friend sent this; I thought you might enjoy a history lesson!

You'll love this from Col. D.G. Swinford, USMC, Ret., a history buff. You would really have to dig to get this kind of ringside seat to history:

1. The first German serviceman killed in WW2 was killed by the Japanese (China, 1937), the first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940); the highest ranking American killed was Lt.Gen. Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps. . . So much for allies.

2. The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham, USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonorable Discharge for lying about his age. (His benefits were later restored by act of Congress).

3. At the time of Pearl Harbor the top US Navy command was Called CINCUS (pronounced "sink us"), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train was named "Amerika"! All three were soon changed for PR purposes.

4. More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions, your chance of being killed was 71%.

5. Generally speaking there was no such thing as an "average" fighter pilot. You were either an ace or a target. For instance, Japanese ace, Hiroyoshi Nishiza, shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger in a cargo plane.

6. It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a mistake. Tracers had different ballistics so (at long range) if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet, tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

YOU'VE GOT TO LOVE THIS ONE...
7. When allied armies reached the Rhine the first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).

8. German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City but it wasn't worth the effort. (?)

9. German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

10. Among the first "Germans" captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they were captured by the US Army.

AND I SAVED THE BEST FOR LAST....

11. Following a massive naval bombardment, 35,000 US and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska in the Aleutian Islands! 21 troops were killed in the firefight. It would have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island...

(usma1958-forum) Posted By: PLAUE Walt 22120 B2 <usma58@msn.com>

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A reminder from Brent Leutzow **96H.**

CUT-OFF DATE for HILTON GARDEN INN reservations at the discount price is **12 AUG.**. Later reservations will be at the regular price. { Please pass this info on to your 82nd FG Friends.)
2/ Also, do not forget your **NAME TAGS** while packing for the Reunion.

From Terry Massick 95H

Hello Everyone,

The calendar says Spring, but, Mother Nature continues to say Winter. Maybe we should just move onto Summer and the, OSHKOSH REUNION.

Since the last NEWSLETTER, the 82nd FG website continues it's worldwide mission and the visitor numbers continue to climb.

Dec. 04, was a record setting month. Dec. 23rd, set a new one day visitor record with: 485. And, a new one month record: 8,311. Bringing the overall total to: 97,348.

Jan. 05 was almost a record month with: 8,168. Bringing the overall total to: 105,516.

Feb. 05 was another good month with: 6,853. Bringing the 27 month, 82nd FG website, overall total to: 112,369 visitors.

Congratulations to former, 97th FTS - C.O. - 'now' Col. Wolfgang Asmus, on his recent promotion. Col. Wolf, Brenda, and family are standing by for the next assignment.

Welcome to the new 97th FTS - C.O., Lt. Col. Douglas Standifer, formerly of the 96th FTS.

97th FTS, Maj. Jeff Greyson and crew continue their work on the 97th FS history. Their work is being displayed on the walls and in show cases at the 97th FTS - HQ. I make sure, Jeff gets scans/copies of all material pertaining to the 97th FS, that is sent to me.

The following families, of our 82nd FG members, are seeking photos and/or additional information:

Pvt. Arnold R. Luoma/95th
2nd Lt. Aurelian L. Jekot/95th - POW - 11/16/44
2nd Lt. Hiram C. Pitts/96th - KIA - 12/25/43
2nd Lt. Thomas R. Welsh/96th

I have received a request from the family of, Richard C. 'Stumpy' Hollinger / HQ, that if anyone has any photos with Stumpy in them, they would greatly appreciate, scans/copies of them. So, if anyone does have photos with Stumpy in them, please let me know and/or send them to me. I will then send them onto Stumpy's family and will also load them onto the 82nd FG website.

At present, the 3rd printing of 'ADORIMINI', is in a, holding patter. When Jake checked with the printer 12/03, the numbers were: $3,000 for 100 copies. After, all the legal paper was done, transfering 'ADORIMINI' printing rights to me, I requested a final figure 12/04. The amount had went up to $4,500 plus for 100 copies. Jake again contacted the printing company, but, the amount was only dropped to $4,300 plus for 100 copies. The 'plus' is for new additional pages and a new jacket cover. Thus, the reason for the holding pattern. Hopefully, I'll have more positive news in the near future for, 'ADORIMINI - III'.

Again, many thanks to the 82nd FG website, 'Volunteers'. It is greatly appreciated.

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From Bill Mason HqH

I attended Stumpy's Memorial Graveside Service yesterday and spoke a few words about how much he is respected and loved by the 82nd FG. Also that my Dad wanted to attend the service but couldn't due to the short notice. His daughters related how Stumpy frequently told his family stories about the 82nd FG and what the 82nd meant to him. The service was attended by about twelve family members and the weather was perfect, sunny and mild.

His daughters, Janice and Susan, told me he had written down about half a dozen or so short stories or accounts of his days at Foggia. I thought this might be of interest to the 82nd FGA Newsletter, 82nd FG Website, the revised "Adorimini", P-38 NA Newsletter, etc. If you want copies of his writings, please contact Janice. Both daughter's info are listed below and Hank will see that both receive the 82nd FGA Newsletter.

Janice Simmons
11311 Niagara St.
Thornton, Colorado 80233

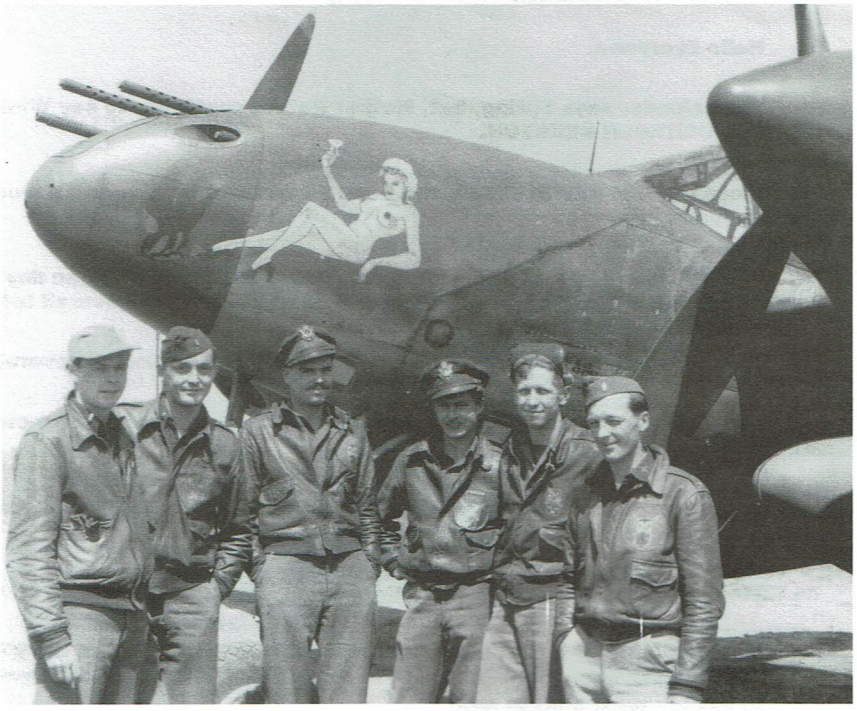
Susan Brown
3400 W. 13th St., #230
Greeley, Colorado 80634

From Ike Eckermann 97th

15 Sept. 2004

Hi Hank:
Here is A picture of Some 97th Pilots. Taken in Italy 1944.
We hope You All Are Surviving All The STORMS OK.

Best Regards,
Ike



(l – r) Don Foley - NY.; Wallace Engh - Minn.; John Tate - Okla.; William Patterson - Mont.; Fred Phillips - Tenn.; John Batie - Idaho.

Donations to the 82nd FG Association

August, 2004 - February,2005

Sustaining Members	Life Members	Life Members	Honorary Members	Associate Members
Buonaguidi, A.	Blurock, W.	Phillips, H.	Donohoo, R.	Daley, G.
Cavanaugh, G.	DeForge, A.	Pinson, C.	Fine, D.	Fuereder, G.
Craft, B.	Ellison, M.	Teegarden, D.	Medley, N.	Gerard,F.
Otto, G.	Fuqua, G.	Roalsvig, M.	Morgan, F.	Lawrence, B.
Powell, G.	Harding, R.	Teegarden, D.	Massick, T,	Mc Auliffe, C.
Norris, R.	Hendrix, J.	Thompson, L.	Pratt, B.	Roberson, R.
	Mason, B.	Willsie, R.	Rockey, K.	

Donations to the 82nd FG Website

August, 2004 - February,2005

Carpenter, R.; Fuereder, G.; Grayson, J.; Jones, L.; Kane, J; Lewis, G.; Mason, B.; Medley, O.; Monyhan, J.; Otto, G.; Phillips, H.; Sidwell, G.

Please notify me if I have overlooked your name on either list. hp

Editor's Comments

The usual **82ND FIGHTER GROUP EMAIL MEMBERS** list has been omitted for this issue to save space.
Only the **Changes since the last Newsletter** are offered below:

New Listings.

Harley Barnhart - 95th- harleyb2@earthlink.net; Ike Eckermann-97th- loriike@earthlink.net; Dawn Evans 95AHdawnevans@cyberstreet.com
Nancy Medley 95H nancym@manduano.com ; Jesse Oliver -95th Jobar@gilanet.com ; Harlan Raymond,-95th HarlanHook@wmconnect.com

Address Changes

Dick and Zeta Gadbury -97th zgadbury3@frontiernet.net ; Al Scheckwitz -95th -

Deleted

George Bowers,- 95th; John Heller- 97th; Charles Lortz - 95th; T.O. Mauch -95th; Billy Nickell -xxa; Blythe Pratt 97H; Buddy Strozier -96th.

hp

BY JASON JETT
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

World War II pilot Philip Taback shows off scale replicas of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter plane with the zeal of a young boy playing with model airplanes and dreaming of adventures in the wild blue yonder.

For the Union Township resident, images of the plane do not prompt flights of fancy, however. They evoke a fading glory that he is seeking to preserve.

The retired lieutenant colonel's combat missions are now virtual, chronicled on a Web site maintained by fellow members of the Army Air Corps 82nd Fighter Group that was credited with driving Rommel out of North Africa during World War II.

After 50 missions during which he recorded 13 probable-downed German aircraft (he notes there was no video camera in war planes at the time) and 23 damaged ones.

VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCES ACROSS THE COUNTY
PAGE 40

and 14 years as an Air National Guard member and flight instructor, there are no more fighter planes or hangars in his life.

Now, 20 years into retirement, his wings hang on walls in a collection mounted and framed by Marsha Taback, the wife of his son Steven who lives in South Windsor, Conn.

Veterans Day prompted the former Newark resident to point out the heroics of the 82nd Fighter Group as a tribute to dead and living comrades.

"I don't want any publicity for myself," he stressed yesterday. "I want the attention to go to my fighter group, and the 97th Squadron."

The former pilot still loves his old plane, the P-38, which he said Germans called "The Twin-Tailed Devil" because of its distinctive double fuselage.

"If I had to go to war again, with a reciprocal engine and not a jet, I would take that plane," he said.

"It was a twin-engine fighter with no torque, four 50-caliber machine guns and a 20 mm cannon in the nose that was easy to aim because it was right in the middle."

Taback's military career was borne out of the Depression. Able to find only odd jobs paying $12 a week after graduating from high school, he enlisted in 1940. The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred while he was undergoing primary training in Muskogee, Okla.

A straight shooter who sometimes flashes humor, the former fighter pilot said it was not until enlistment that he learned his first name is not really Philip.

"I'm Jewish, and my father gave me the first name 'Pincus,'" he said. "My commanding officer said 'Your name is not

[See **PILOT**, Page 40]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

Philip. It says 'Pincus' on your birth certificate. Okay, I will call you Pincus Philip."

Taback is a cheerleader of his old squadron and fighter group, which was transported to war on the original Queen Mary, painted gray in a conversion for military use. The fighter pilots went on from northwestern Africa to do battle in Europe leading up to the Allied victory in 1945.

His military career was not without misfortune. His plane was shot by a German pilot during a mission over French Morocco in which the commanding officer was killed. Taback survived the crash landing, then had to run on foot from the rounds of enemy planes.

Before Taback was sent overseas, during flight training off the coast of San Diego, his plane was struck by friendly fire from an overanxious pilot flying behind him. His plane caught fire, forcing him to bail out and be rescued by a Navy boat.

After his military career ended in 1965, Taback was a cigar salesman until retiring at age 62.

Shunning involvement in veterans groups such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Jewish War Veterans, he now pours energy into the legacy of the 82nd Fighter Group — sharing his collection at www.82ndfightergroup.com and attending annual reunions around the country.

Taback's wife Harriett, who was his girlfriend when he scrawled her name on one side of the nose of his fighter plane (on the other was the music scale for "The Jersey Bounce"), died five years ago. He regularly joins their daughter, Karen Montalto, for dinner at her home in Livingston.

A three-sport athlete while at Weequahic High School, Taback stays active by regularly bowling at Garden State Bowl in Union and golfing at Ash Brook Golf Course in Scotch Plains, where he also has worked part time.

Taback keeps on top of current events, too.

"I was all for Bush attacking Iraq," said the veteran. "He should have gone in and blasted them off. But now he should bring the troops back home, because too many are dying."

As a former member and flight instructor with the New Jersey Air National Guard, Taback said he knows exactly what happened last week when an F-16 fighter plane strafed an elementary school in Ocean County.

"I flew that route and fired at that range," he said. Joking that he wanted to avoid a court martial, Taback did not go into specifics, but theorized the pilot had his finger on the trigger during a turning maneuver to align with the target, and G-force pressure caused rounds to be fired prematurely.

Perhaps it takes a fighter pilot to really know a fighter pilot.

"I first met Phil Taback at Muroc (now Edwards Air Force Base) in early 1942, said Bob Kirtley, a former commander of the 95th Squadron of the 82nd Fighter Group. "He arrived with a group of the first Flying Sergeants. We took them to a pretty good little war in North Africa about nine months later.

"These Flying Sergeants were the finest and most dedicated young pilots that I encountered in my long career in fighters," added Kirtley. "Phil was one of the most dedicated of the bunch."

Phil Taback is featured in Union Township's Star-Ledger Veterans Day Observance.

* * * * * *

Phil is shown holding his prized P-38 photo, which appears to be autographed by just about everyone in the Group.
Sadly, space dictated that the photo had to be cropped. This deprives the readers of viewing him in his Cadet Flying Gear photo (he was a "handsome devil" with his scarf and goggles); The famous Adorimini photo, standing next to the P-38 that he walked away from after a crash landing; A photo in post war flying gear--looks like P-51s in the background and finally a photo of the 82nd Fighter Groups's book, Adorimini. hp

JENNIFER HULSHIZER/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

Last glory day of 6th FG.

Written by Octavian Ghita and John Crump .

Refueling of an IAR-81C from Grupul 6. Vinatore, on Popesti-Leordeni airfield, in summer of 1944. This version of the IAR is notable for its armament of two wing-mounted MG151 20 mm cannons. It is also a rare example of an IAR with a two-colour spinner. Within the text is another photo of IAR-81C preparing to defend against B-24 "Liberators".

Early morning, 10 June 1944. On airbases near Foggia, Italy, there is a bustle of activity as the sun rises. Forty-six "Lightnings" of the 82nd Fighter Group (95th, 96th, and 97th Squadrons), each carrying a 1000lb bomb and a long-range drop tank, are taking-off from Vincenzo airfield. They will be joined by forty-eight P-38's of the 1st Fighter Group (27th, 71st, and 94th Squadrons) flying as escort. One after another, nearly 100 American "Lightnings" take wing and climb to altitude. Target: Ploesti, more than 600 miles away. Mission: to attack the Romano-Americano oil refinery defended by IAR fighters of the 6th Romanian Fighter Group on Pipera and Popesti-Leordeni airbases.

The oilfields of Ploesti became top priority targets for the 15th AF during the spring and summer of 1944. Eight high altitude bombing missions had been flown between April 5th, and June 10th, with less than satisfactory results and with heavy losses due to anti-aircraft and fighters.

Romanian IAR 80 and 81 fighters had proven dangerous to Allied bombers on missions against Ploesti. The IAR-80/81 was designed in 1939, after adopting the fuselage of the Polish PZL P-24E (produced on license in Romania), with new wings and a more powerful engine. Production in Brasov's IAR plant from 1940 until January,1943 totaled more than 400 aircraft. The final variant, specifically built as a bomber interceptor, was the IAR 81C. Powered by a radial IAR K14-1000A (Gnome-Rhone) engine of 1000 HP, with a top speed of 514 km/h, and armed with 2 x 20 mm Mauser MG151 cannons and 4 x 7.7 mm Browning-FN machine guns, the IAR 81C could, in the hands of a good pilot, be a deadly adversary of heavy bombers. In the opinion of Romanian pilots, it was a good plane, maneuverable and easy to fly.

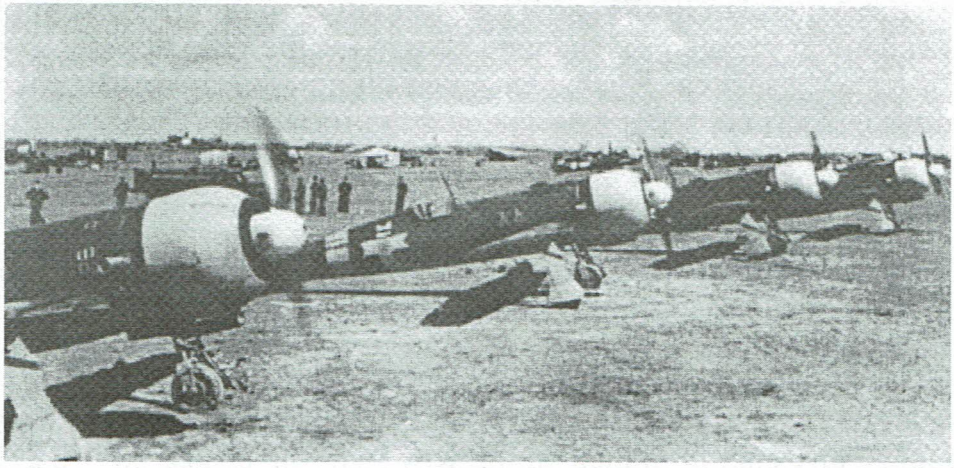
To defend the oilfields from American bombers, the IAR-81C was delivered in the summer of 1944 to some veteran groups. Among them was the 6th Fighter Group (Eskadrilles No: 58, 59, 61 and 62), leaded by Captain Dan Vizanti.

Yet by 1944, the IAR-81 fighter was overmatched in performance by both the P-38 and P-51. So the Romanians used tactics to keep P-51s from dogfighting IARs. When attacking bomber formations, German and Romanian Bf 109s occupied the escorts while IAR squadrons struck at the bombers. In this way, bomber losses ran higher than 7% on every mission.

For these reasons, Fifteenth Air Force planners decided to send P-38 "Lightnings" armed with bombs on a low altitude approach to Ploesti's oilfields, much as they had sent B-24s in low for the August, 1943 Ploesti raid. The hope was the low-flying P-38s would be able to both achieve surprise and pinpoint bomb the widely dispersed refinery facilities.

(Cont, next Page)

The 28 IAR fighters made one pass through the American group. The low altitude didn't offer a chance for dogfighting. The P-38's tried to spread their formation, but there was no time - - the battle was over in less than four minutes.



American pilot Herbert "Stub" Hatch of the 71 Squadron, 1st FG tallied five kills in the melee, emptying his guns while wracking his P-38 thru the swirl of fighters. Meanwhile, the Romanian pilots had a field day. Within that brief timespan, the Romanians claimed 14 "Lightnings" of the 1st FG (by its records). The hardest-hit 71st Squadron was reduced to a single flight of four. Hatch was one of the few survivors of the 71st. By American accounts, the combat was in a shallow valley filled with more than 40 aircraft, with airplanes erratically trying to avoid each other, and many hitting the ground.

Meanwhile, the 82nd FG "Lightnings" dropped their bombs over the oil fields, hitting a cracking plant, a huge storage tank and three refinery units. The 82nd listed nine aircraft lost in the action, for a total between the two fighter groups of 23 planes: 30-percent of the attacking force.

After the raid, the U.S. formation was intercepted by other German fighters, including Messerschmitt 110s, probably from NJG 100. Lt. Col. Ben A. Mason Jr., Deputy Group Commander of 82nd FG, shot down one of the Bf 110s. On this raid, Lt. Merrill Adelson of 96th FS claimed the destruction of the Me 210 and the He 111, plus the destruction of an unidentified single-engined fighter, while another 96th FS pilot, Lt. John Sognia claimed a Bf 109. Lt. Lee Lette of the 97th FS claimed an Hs 126. The dogfight with JG-53, almost wiped out the 71st FS.

The IAR fighters pilots returned triumphantly to their airbase, which was unscathed. Romanian accounts list one plane shot down, one other heavily damaged and two lost in a collision in the first moment of the attack for total losses of 4 planes and 3 pilots. Yet for the whole 2nd Fighting Flotilla this was a happy day - - no bombs were dropped on the airfield and dozens of enemy fighters were downed.

Returning P-38 pilots claimed to have destroy more than 30 opponents. From a history of the 82nd FG: "The IAR pilots claimed quite a few P-38s that day. The 1st Fighter Group was eventually credited with 26-3-6 enemy aircraft in this and other air actions on June 10th, but the price was extremely high: 14 of its 39 pilots were MIA, 9 of them from the 71st Squadron." The 82nd claimed enemy aircraft losses of 8-1-2 and suffered its own losses of 8 pilots MIA and 10 "Lightnings" destroyed.

Despite the battering of 10 June, the 82nd flew support the next day for a B-24 mission to Constanta. In coming weeks, the 15th Air Force would continue to bomb Ploesti with eleven more high altitude raids, but would stop just before the Russians overran Bucharest. And whatever successes there were in these attacks, came at high cost.

(Cont, next page)

As the American P-38s (now a dozen fewer in number due to planes returning home for mechanical problems), changed course for the final approach their targets, they neared Pipera airbase, near Bucharest. Even though the fighter bombers were flying at 50 meters altitude, German radar had detected the formation. Partly due to the early hour of attack, Romanian Fighter Headquarters assumed the purpose of the mission was to hit the fighter bases.

East of Bucharest, on the deck, the "Lightnings" began seeing a variety of Luftwaffe aircraft, heading south past the P-38s on either side. Just after 71st Squadron of 1st FG dropped their auxiliary tanks at the initial point, the first two flights found six twin engine German bombers over an airfield and shot them down. A moment later the squadron was jumped by the IARs. Even though the 82nd pilots had been ordered not to engage any enemy planes on the way in to the target, an Me 210 and He 111 were destroyed and an unidentified single-engine fighter was claimed as a probable. More details we can discover in German reports:

Shortly before the "Lightnings" entered the target area, they were intercepted by the Messerschmitt Bf 109s of JG 53 "Pik As", commanded by Knight's Cross holder Major Jürgen Harder (64 victories). The 1st and 3d Staffeln had been scrambled from Targsorul-Nou, an airbase to the southwest of Ploesti, at 08:05am . 20 minutes later, they

were followed by 2./JG53. At around 08:35, just as the bomb-carrying "Lightnings" of 82nd FG started climbing to prepare their attack, the two first Staffeln fell upon them. Leutnant Hans Kornatz (1./JG 53) claimed a P-38 as his 32nd victory at 08:40, witnessed by Unteroffizier Ulrich Zemper. The German fighters didn't follow the "Lightnings" into the Flak-fire over the target area, but waited for the Americans and attacked them as they turned for home.

A further number of victories were claimed:

Rank - Pilot	*Staffel*	*Time*	*Remarks*
Gefreiter Heinz Hommes	1./JG53	09:16	his kill No. 1
Gefreiter Meyer	2./JG53	09:18	his kill No. 2
Leutnant Rupert Weninger	1./JG53	09:23	his kill No. 17
Leutnant Erich Gehring	2./JG53	09:24	his kill No. 4
Unteroffizier Willi Dreyer	1./JG53		his kill No. 4

During this combat, one Bf 109 G-6 was shot down: Gefreiter Helmut Köditz was killed as his "white 3" went down in the vicinity of Brosteni. A second Bf 109 G-6 made a successful belly-landing with minor battle damage at Horsesti.

Then, the 1st FG ran into trouble. Enemy fighters mistakenly identified as "Fw-190s" pounced on the leading 71st Squadron. The interceptors were actually Romanian IAR-80s and IAR-81s.

At 5:53 a.m., 10 minutes before the attack, Romanian captain Dan Vizanti (15 kills) and the pilots of 6th Group had moved to position in a waiting zone, northwest of Bucharest. Five minutes later, ground control confirmed the attack was impending - "The target is our airfield! Go get 'em, boys!"

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By the evening of 10 June, no one could have said this was to be the last victorious battle for Romanian aviation against the "Alliati". The final two months to 23 August, 1944 the day of armistice with the Allies, would prove to be a dramatic period for the Romanian hunters. They would be decimated in the further raids that summer - - with 56 top pilots killed or wounded. And survivors would have no calm or peace, as they were sent with some 260,000 other men to fight the ground war against Germans in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria.

From 1941 to 1944, the American Air Forces lost 399 planes in Romanian skies. 1100 aviators were killed or MIA and 1400 were captured. On Romanian side more than 15.000 civilians were killed or wounded during 'anti-oil' actions.

For Luftwaffe forces in Romania coming days after 10 June 1944 appears very bitter... The fighters of the Fifteenth Air Force soon managed to revenge themselves. On 23 June, they claimed 24 enemy fighters over Romania. Twelve fell before the guns of 52 FG "Mustangs", the last being the Group's 102nd victory in a thirty day period. On this day, Major Herschel Green, the leading U.S. ace in the Mediterranean theater, scored his 15th kill as he shot down a Bf 109, possibly Feldwebel Heinz Sieg of 1./JG 53. The Fw 190 F of 4./SG 2 and II./SG 10 took the hardest punishment. 4./SG 10 lost three pilots (including the Staffelkapitän and ground-attack veteran, Knight's Cross holder Hauptmann Günther Müller, who was killed in the Fw 190 F-8 "white 13" on his 900th combat sortie). 4./SG 10 recorded four Fw 190 F-8 shot down with two pilots killed and one wounded. 31 GF's Lt. John J. Voll, who evetually would become the top scorer in the Fifteenth Air Force, scored his first victory (of 21 by the end of the war) with one of these Fw 190s. Among the successful I./JG 53 pilots on 10 June, Rupert Weninger was shot down and killed by Mustangs on 24 June; four days later, Erich Gehring and Willi Dreyer were shot down and wounded.

From Jean Hammond 97H

Dear Mr. Phillips,

I was in touch with you early in 2005, while trying to compile a scrap book about my daddy---John E. England Jr.. daddy was an airplane mechanic in WW2 & the Korean Conflict & was so proud of the fact he "never" lost one of his planes & the P 38 was his favorite of all I believe. (although he loved any & all planes).
Oh by the way, my name is Jean Hammond, and I certainly want to thank you for putting daddy on the mailing list for the 82nd. Fighter Group Association--he enjoyed me reading them to him & I only wish he would have been healthy enough to travel to one of ya'lls reunion meetings. Daddy passed away April 16, 2004. He is happy now & is with my mother, exactly where he craved to be for 8 long years.
I was able to go to the 82nd web sight & get a lof of information & pictures for his scrap book & to show & read to him. I will be forever grateful to you for the information & for telling me how to find so much on the computer.

Along with a message of many, many thanks---I also wanted to send this: Air Force Discharge (that I found in daddy's papers. I tried everything way I could think of to try to locate some family of this person, so that I could send this to a family member of Srgt. Clifford E. Sandlin. But I have had no luck at all. And to be very honest with you---I'm not very computer literate at all anyway. I am hoping you may have some luck.
I have no childhood memories of this gentleman & don't remember daddy talking about him, but I was only 6 yrs. old when we got out of the service.
I certainly would love to know this family had this important document & have no idea why daddy ended up with it in his papers (it's been in the safety deposit box with his records all these years, so I know this must have been a close & dear friend of daddys).

if you find this family, I sure would appreciate it if you could let me know & if you don't have time to check it out, I would like it returnmed I guess--I don't know what else to do, except hang on to it