



The Hero of Brighton Beach

The loud welcoming barks from Mandy, a black Lab, announced my presence at the Levitan home. Lee led me to the family room for the



interview.

As I sat at the end of the sofa, a terra cotta Japanese warrior seated on the coffee table stared at us ready to listen to Lee's story.

In 1942 Lee wanted to be in the Air Corps and did not want to be drafted. He enlisted. Camp Uptow on Long Island was where he was tested and retested to identify the skills that would lead to training in the Air Corps.

His service adventures began when he and others in his group got sore throats. From sick call he was sent to the base hospital. While he was being treated for his infection, his entire group was sent to Texas. When cured, cadet Levitan was sent to Miami Beach. After a few months of basic training there, Lee was assigned to Scott Field in Illinois to learn to be a radio operator. He was then trained on the British G Box navigator system of navigation. He became a G Box navigator and used the system in all his Future missions. He was then assigned to aerial gunnery school in Yuma, Arizona.

Lee was given a ten day delay en route to join up with his crew at Barksdale Field in Shreveport, Louisiana. Lee had been trained to be part of a B 17 crew. Now at Barksdale Field he became parts of the crew for the "widow

maker" the B 26. After three months of transitional training they were sent to Hunter Field in Savannah, Georgia to pick up a B 26. The plan was to fly to Natal, Brazil, to the Azores and then to a field in northern Scotland. But a snafu sent the crew to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey. Now the crews would board a British liner. As the ship sailed along the coast toward open sea, the liner passed by Lee's apartment house and with binoculars he could see the windows to his apartment on Brighton Beach.

Within two weeks the convoy reached Liverpool, England. While 30 Air Corps crews departed to their assigned stations, Lee and two men were instructed to make sure all the baggage was sent to the proper assigned station.

An infantry officer had Lee's and the two men's travel orders. The officer went to his assignment and left the three enlisted men without orders. They then went to the Military Police headquarters in London. They got temporary passes.

Eventually, the two men found their assignments. Lee flew to Paris to join his crew at an airbase in northeastern France. On the way he stayed at the Rothschild Estates — a very old and classy palace.

Valentine's Day in 1944 was a very normal day. The mission for his group of B 26s was to destroy a bridge. By this time in the war in Europe, the German high command knew that our plane formations were always maintained. Our planes did not scatter. Thus the Germans directed extra flack at the formations of American planes that day.

As a G Box navigator, Lee had a position on the B 26. His pencil fell down onto the floor. He bent down to pick it up. When he straighten up again he notice a hole in the plane where his head would have been. A shell had created a hole in the plane opposite his position. Luck or divine intervention saved his life.

In another mission he witnessed an adjacent B 26 take flack that killed the pilot and copilot and as the plane began to spin, the crew of Lee's close friends perished. There were other close calls.

From this base Lee and the crew flew 35 combat missions. These missions were mostly over Germany to bomb bridges, railroad facilities,

marshalling yards, cities and enemy troop movements. During this period Lee was awarded 7 Air Medals, a Presidential Unit Citation and other citations.

Finally in October of 1945, Lee was discharged and he soon registered to attend NYU (New York University) to major in business. But as luck would have it, pressure cookers were the rage. So he sold pressure cookers and did very well. No school. He continued in sales, many business ventures plus advertising, but promoting his bumper stickers was his greatest success in latter life.

After his wife, Barbara, read an article by Dennis McCarthy, about WOW, she encouraged him to join. He became a member at the age of 87.

Mandy sat nearby and listened very attentively to Lee's adventures. Meanwhile the clay Japanese warrior on the coffee table maintained his menacing position

Ed Moreno



Gratitude to Dr. Hale

On January 5th, we at W.O.W.'s were so very privileged to have as our guest speaker, US Army retired Col. Robert G. Hale., Oral and maxillary facial surgeon DDS of Northridge.

Dr. Hale spoke to us of our torn heroes. Service men who suffered horrific tragedies that took off their mouths and faces and the like. The many surgeries of reconstruction gut wrenching to even think of what they go through to have some resemblance of a face. Most of all to have functioning features. To see to hear, to eat, to breath, "Oh how can we even begin to understand? The endurance they have to have with surgery after surgery, the absolutely incredible fortitude, just too much to tell about here on this paper for the "Wings over Wendy's" veterans and caring members. We all want to thank Dr. Hale for his dedication, endurance with his blessed and gifted educated hands. Our hearts are full of gratitude and affection for you.

Peggy Jean Basset

Coach

Bud Lindahl was stationed at Wendling, England just north of London while he served as a B 24 "G Box" navigator. His most vivid and happy memory was the

celebration of VE Day in Piccadilly Circus in London.

His bucket list for after the war was very short. He was not seeking romance and adventures in exotic places. Bud just wanted to be a teacher and coach.

As a coach in New London, Minnesota he trained one of the original Lakers — Whitey Skoog. Bud lived and coached a few miles from where Roy Emberland was raised. He coached track and field, but not in a stadium, but by a row of stocking ponds. Next to the ponds was a straight away road which was used for the sprints.

As a coach with Los Angeles Unified Schools, his junior high boys and girls took the city championship in bowling at Reseda Bowl.

Moreover, he trained Randy Cross in shot put. Randy took the California State Championship for his class in the shot put. This young athlete played football in high school and then went to UCLA to further distinguish himself. Bud bragged about Larry Dierker a star pitcher for Houston that he coached while the teen attended Sequoia Junior High. Dierker eventually became the manager for the Houston baseball team.

Bud recalled a special friend that he met in training school — Dale Leigh. Even though they served at different bases in England, they stayed friends. Bud was the best man at Dale's wedding. As we continued chatting about athletes we influenced in high school, Hal Bledsol, Charles White, Kevin Williams, Malcom Moore, etc, and coaches like Lonnie Lee, Quick, and Jae etc. **Bud** added that his favorite TV Channels were wherever baseball was showing and his favorite Military channels.

I remarked that my favorite comic strips were La Cucaracha, Blondie, and Crankshaft. Bud immediately answered that Lio and Family Circus were his.

After glancing at the charming senior ladies seated near us, Bud and I left Wendy's to do the chores our wives had sent us to complete.

March Birthdays

Ted Davis-March 2, 1939
Roy Emberland-March 3, 1934
Mike La Vere-March 14, 1925
Al Olivari-March 17, 1918
Bruce Monkman-March 19, 1921
Bob Stiles March 22, 1937
Ed Moreno-March 23, 1928
Bob Diamond March 25, 1923
Mike Kata-March 27, 1921
Wally Aurich-March 27, 1926
Chip Stevens-March 28, 1958
Fred Kaplan-March 30, 1937
Murray Siegel-March 31, 1925

**Edited from an article by Dennis
McCarthy,**



Chaplain George L. Fox,



Chaplain Alexander D. Goode,



Chaplain Clark V. Poling,



Chaplain John P. Washington,

LA Daily News

REMEMBERING THE FOUR CHAPLAINS

Four visiting chaplains will leave 2015 for a few hours here at the American Legion Post 826 and journey to the North Atlantic in Feb. 3, 1943, when four men just like them locked arms on the deck of a sinking transport ship and went down together to a watery grave.

They didn't have to. They had life jackets. They could have saved themselves, but that would have left four young seamen without life jackets to die.

The Four Chaplains of U.S. military lore couldn't allow that. "They were devout men of faith, but of different faiths going to meet the same God," says Ken Mayer, Commander of AL Post 826, who with Post Chaplain Herb O'Meara and the four guest chaplains, will now re-create for you that infamous day when their ship was torpedoed.

"The message of love of your fellow man, even if his religious teachings are not the same as yours, is the critical message that the memorial of the Four Chaplains imparts on those who hear the story" Commander Mayer continues.

D-Day, Pearl Harbor, the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jima are all burned into the psyche of this country forever. The Four Chaplains are slowly fading from mind.

"But not if we, the Legionnaires of Post 826 have anything to say about it."

It was an icy dawn that February morning when the USAT Dorchester — an old ship hastily pressed into service as a troop transport — was battling angry, North American seas with 902 American servicemen, sailors, merchant seamen and some civilians bound for Greenland.

Only 230 would make it, and they were in no

condition to fight. A German submarine had been stalking the ship, and now, with the Dorchester in sight of land and her protective convoy gone, it struck — sending a torpedo into the old ship's flank.

Their life jackets behind. The four chaplains were already there trying to calm everyone down. George Fox was a Methodist minister, John Washington, a Catholic priest; Alexander Goode was a Jewish rabbi, and Clark Poling, a Dutch Reformed minister. They moved about the ship handing out life jackets and helping injured soldiers toward the lifeboats.

When the order came to abandon ship, they had already exhausted the supply of life jackets, and there were still four sailors left who needed one. The four chaplains took off theirs, and gave them to the young men. Then they locked arms, bowed their heads in prayer and went down with the ship together.

They never asked the men they gave their life jackets to if they were Jewish, Protestant or Catholic. All that mattered to these brave chaplains as they faced a slow death in frigid waters was that they all shared the same God. Ask yourself "What would I do?"

Military records show that Congress wanted to bestow the Medal of Honor on each of the four chaplains, but because they were not "under fire" when they gave the men their life jackets, they did not technically qualify. So members of Congress decided to authorize a special medal called the "Four Chaplains Medal."

Kudos to Ken Mayer WOW Member and Post 826 Commander and Post Chaplain **Herb O'Meara** for the very moving program, and decorations.

Editors Notes February 20, 2015

Tuesday 2-3, 2015

Dr. Cohen scheduled Alice Stone for a possible heart stint tomorrow morning.

Thursday 2-5, 2015

Hospital Alice has good color and is recovering well at West Hills hospital .

Monday 2-16, 2015 Washington's birthday

This seems to be a significant week for us at Wings over Wendy's.

Alice looked great that morning. I don't know how or why William Sanchez showed up as our guest speaker. His very real story about being ordered to take down the American flag on the island of Corregidor, shredding it, and then saving a small part of it. And being in the prisoner of war camp in Tokyo with Louis Zamperini was absolutely captivating.

Our speaker's podium was his for forty five minutes and we all listened in profound silence. We

heard the story, we watched the movie and now here he was Mr Sanchez standing there before us telling about his time in the gulag of the South Pacific.

We were taken there with his account of the beatings and punishment, at the hands of "wily bird".

The living hell he and Zamperini survived and the demons they brought home made for a WWII remembrance that we won't soon forget.

Thank You Dennis McCarthy for you Daily News article last Friday.

Thursday 2-19-2015

Tribute to Hal Knowles

The Bleating bagpipes coming from the foyer welcomed us to a very well produced memorial for Hal at the Odyssey Restaurant this evening

We had forty WOW members in a well appointed banquet room of two hundred sixty veterans, family and .guests

Hal was the real deal a man of strong convictions, a quite demeanor and endless energy to get the orders of the day completed.

Hal went West on December 19, 2014, will sorely miss you Major Harold Knowels U.S.M.C.

Fred R. Kaplan

Semper Fi

Wings Luncheon

Thursday March 5th, 2015

Marriott Hotel Woodland Hills

11:30 AM

Parking will be provided in the structure for 2 hours only. If you will be longer park at the two hours park at the mall.

Menu Crusted Tilapia

Chicken Cacciatore

Rigatoni Alfredo

Steamed Vegetables

Roasted Potatoes

Salad Bar

Desert

Soft drinks

Tea or coffee

Tax & Tip included

Grandsons Amazing Find

Discovered in the basement of his parents, Michael Burton, of North Hollywood spotted several large trash bags, looking full of what? Curiously opening the first one, and looking upon a bunch of paper items, they were to his amazement about grandfather Lt. Cornel Edwin Art Cunningham, of the 13th Air force a WWII pilot of the 68th fighter squadron, known as "the Lighting Lancers" for the P-38's they flew. Also flying P-38's in the "Air cobras".

Others were pictures in many albums and A lots of sketches of "War birds" and with fighter notes included. Pin-up girl pictures, hand painted in color and pencil sketched. They were wonderfully written poems about service life in general, and newspaper clippings honoring him. What a fabulous find Michael. The portraits of his fellow bunkies, buddies, and others, just waiting to be discovered enough material for a book or movie, "and glory be", how many metals he had.

Grandpa married, lovely & pretty Juanita, and her resemblance is recognized in much of his pin-up art, it's her, his wife the love of his life.

Edwin's art, poetry and stories his salutation through hard and lonely times of war.

Dames, planes, and tales of an aviator's military life Michael got to know his Grand-Pa. We thank you for sharing Michael with us at Wings over Wendy's.

Peggy Jean Basset

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no later than
the last Wednesday of the
month!**

Submit by Email to

ndbaliber@gmail.com

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