

A BUSY BEE



Then



Now

One of the busiest 90 year old WOW members is a New Yorker who joined the U.S. Army Aviation Cadet Training Program after high school graduation in 1943, Mike La Vere. The year after graduation found Mike at several schools. He took his Basic training at Keesler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi. Then it was on to Nashville Cadet Classification Center to determine his future MOS - pilot, navigator or bombardier. He was classified as an aerial navigator and was sent to the 39th CID at Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina.

Further training was provided at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas. Mike took his final training as an aerial navigator at the Pan American Airways Facility at the University of Miami at Coral Gables and Dinner Key, Florida. In February 1944, this busy bee graduated as an Aerial Navigator, 2nd Lt., Class 44-6. He was sent to Lincoln AAF, Lincoln, Nebraska, where he joined crew 5278. The crew received additional combat training at Peterson Field, Colorado Springs, Colorado and Mountain Home AAF, Idaho.

Soon the crew was ordered to pick up a new B24 plane at Topeka AAF, Kansas and fly it to Grenier Field,

Manchester, New Hampshire. From this point of embarkation the crew flew the great circle route to Gander Lake in Nova Scotia, then to Keflavik, Iceland. They were required to land at Keflavik due to engine malfunctions. The crew got to their final destination at Valley Wales in the British Isles. Mike was sent to Belfast, Ireland for further training with British navigational systems.

Mike began combat missions on May 25, 1944 and completed 36 missions on May, 1945. He was assigned to the 45th BG, 753rd BS, 96th combat wing of the 2nd Air division, 8th Air Force. During the year the crew flew gas haul missions, supplying General Patton's tanks in central French towns of St. Dizier and Claustres. He also flew 12 "trolley" missions to allow ground personnel to view the destruction of various German cities.

Also in May of 1945, Mike navigated a B24 via the Azores to Goose Bay, Labrador. The plane was surrendered in Boston and he was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey for reassignment. Then he was sent to Greensboro, AAF, North Carolina for discharge on December 22, 1945 because the war in the Pacific was ending. The proud navigator took home an Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the EAME theater ribbon with four bronze stars and the Overseas service bar, a busy bee indeed.

Mike completed his Electrical Engineering degree by attending the University of Miami and classes at USC. Initially, various engineering companies employed him. His last engineering employment was with the Hughes Aircraft Co. During his thirty-three years at Hughes his assignments included missile technology with the Space System Division. His most satisfying experience was with the ten years on the Surveyor Program -especially the five years at the Cape Canaveral launch facility. The purpose of the Surveyor was to place an unmanned craft on the moon to test and analyze the moon's terrain for future landings by humans. Maybe Mike can explain how he is still on the moon.

This busy bee did consulting and design for Goldwyn

Studios in Hollywood where a stereo, 13 position dubbing console was required for scoring the 1955 musical, "Guys and Dolls". Mike met cast members Marlon Brando, Frank Sinatra, choreographer Michael Kidd and other members.

He has a shop/studio where he repairs sound systems or operating systems for computers. He also edits videotapes or creates programs of WOW events or activities to be view by the members. Mike answers questions and gives expert advice about smart phones, electronic devices and where to buy them inexpensively. Don't search Google. Ask Mike. This busy bee comes early to help decorate the dining room for special events. He is always adjusting the mikes to improve the sound system. This busy bee is a true professional.

Ed Moreno, Reporter

Birthday Buddies



It was when Steve Politis read "Alice K. Stone" on [the February, 2016 Wings News Birthday List](#) that he wondered whether or not he would ever see her again.

They had sat by the store window every Monday morning for more than ten years having coffee and friendship with the late Colonel Clyde East and Shirley Andrews. Now Steve, our almost 100 year old veteran, waited for Alice to show up.

Alice had been recuperating from a dislocated and broken right arm and had not been there for over three months. There was something else missing at that sunlit table for a long time. It was Steve's warm and affectionate smile.

Alice had arrived in time for Art Sherman to call the meeting to order and then with all standing Alice led the group in [the Pledge of Allegiance](#).

So there it was in the pictures taken that morning with friends holding hands. Steve's smile was back, making the world seem right, happy to be together once more to share her new birthday cake and some very old stories of long ago.

Fred R. Kaplan, Editor

Change of Wings News Publisher

After establishing the format, typing the articles and doing an outstanding job of emailing, printing and distribution since May 2014, Neil Baliber is turning over the publication of the monthly Wings News to Ed Reynolds.

Neil deserves a round of applause and appreciation for his hard work and dedication to the task.

February Speakers

Capt. Bruce Holdt, USN Ret.



Bruce Holdt, Captain USN, Ret, spoke to us on February 22 about his first command of a ship in the Mediterranean Sea. Capt. Holdt quoted from a chapter in his book [Gunboats Forever](#) describing his ship's simulated attack on what was supposed to be an Italian Aircraft Carrier simulating a Soviet Aircraft Carrier. After his ship simulated firing torpedoes and attacking the ship to destroy any remains he discovered it was actually a cruise ship he was attacking and he did a quick 180 degree turn to exit the area before he was reported.

Capt. Holdt also described for us the details of his ship the USS Grand Rapids (PG-98), one of the fastest gunboats in the US Navy.

In addition to being a former business partner of Ed Reynolds, Bruce also served in the 1970's on the USS Tuscaloosa LST-1187 with WOW member Richard Hernandez. They once pulled watch duty together.

CDR. Karen Coyle, USN Ret.



On February 29, Karen Coyle, CDR. USN Ret. spoke to us about her career as one of the first female Naval Aviators. She told us how she became enthralled with Naval Aviation after seeing the Blue Angels perform when she was a young girl. After graduating from college in Florida and working for three years as a youth counselor, she enlisted in the Navy Officer Candidate School. After receiving her commission and earning her wings, she served in both East Coast and West Coast P-3 patrol squadrons. She told us how she was always the first female in her units and that she eventually served a tour at US Navy Headquarters in the Pentagon. She married a career US Army Officer and they both retired after her tour at NAS Point Mugu.

Her experience as a youth counselor and as a Wing Executive Officer provided an excellent background for her post-Navy career as the Dean of Students at Oaks Christian High School. She told us about the World War II history course that Oaks Christian High offers and about how thrilled the students have been to listen to Barney Leone tell his stories about his service.

Group Picture March 28

Do not forget to wear your WOW hat and shirt.

March Birthdays

Ted Davis	March 02, 1939
Dean Abrams	March 13, 1925
Mike LaVere	March 14, 1925
Tony Velarde	March 16, 1946
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
Chip Stevens	March 28, 1958
Fred Kaplan	March 30, 1937
Murray Siegel	March 31, 1925

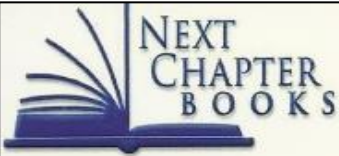
Submissions to Wings News

**No later than the Last
Wednesday of the Month
Email to Ed_ReynoldsJr@MSN.com**


REMINDER

**WOW's monthly food drive is next Monday, March 7th!
Thank You!!!**





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REMINDER!

We all want raffle prizes!

Please search your closets and garages and bring your items to the next Wings Over Wendy's meeting!