WINGS



News

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May 1, 2016 Fred R. Kaplan Editor

We Stay in The News

Connie Hein, center left, was recognized this week for

Hein has been devoting

Wings Over Wendy's is a group of valley aviation veterans who meet weekly at Wendy's West Hills. Operation Gratitude sends care packages to active servicemen and women

her volunteer efforts with Wings Over Wendy's and Operation

time and energy to both organizations for over five years. hown with her are Wings Over Wendy's members and veterar Art Sherman, at left, and Mike Lavere, at right.

Gratitude.

overseas

Wings Over Wendy's Awarded **California Legislature Assembly Resolution**



On behalf of the organization, Ed Reynolds accepted Resolution No. 1597 from California Lt. Governor Gavin Newsom and 45th Assembly District Assemblymember Matthew Dababneh on April 3, 2016. WOW was also given a California State flag at the Town Hall meeting.

People in the News



Reprint from the Valley News Group

Wendy's Family News

Veterans Group Celebrates 14 Years Together Thanks to Their Local Wendy's

14 years ago, three WWII pilots walked into Ron Ross' Wendy's for lunch to discuss their experiences during the war. Over time, this lunch meeting grew to a group with more than 150 members who meet every Monday at 8:30 in the morning. Ron's restaurant isn't open for breakfast but for these guys, he makes an exception.

Members of "Wings Over Wendy's" include aviation veterans from several branches of the military who share stories and organize for various veterans causes. Additionally, they are very active in the community -going to schools and libraries to teach their lessons to children. Without the generous support from Ron, this group might not be celebrating 14 years together and Ron has been more than happy to help.

"I wish more people could see what this generation was all about," Ron said. "They'd have a much greater appreciation of why we are the country we are today."



Submitted by: Ron Ross, RDF Food

Wings Over Wendy's History

Dear Wings News Readers:

This May's Edition marks the second anniversary of <u>Wings News</u> that started with a Thursday lunch at West Hills Pizza.

A long time ago (2000) in the far-far West San Fernando Valley there was a fast food diner called "Wendy's", only one mile from the Ventura County line in a shopping center at Victory and Platt. Ron and Diane Ross had just completed a ten by forty-foot southern extension to their restaurant and business was good.

That intersection was noted for having more fast food shops like Wendy's, McDonald's, Carl's Jr., Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and Colonel Sanders Fried Chicken, than any other major cross street in Los Angeles County.

Wendy's hostess Stella stood maybe five feet tall in low heels with a pink flowered dress, very thin, in her late nineties. She held a firm command as hostess for the lunch time crowd. There was a self-service salad bar to stock and keep clean, tables to clear, teenagers from Hale Junior High to control and old-timers to keep happy with more French fries and refilled soft drinks.

Stella came to work one day in September and that night she passed away. There is a brass placard on the Platt side of the building that tells about her.

The old war veterans circled and one by one landed at Wendy's in the far-far West Valley to tell their stories of World War Two.

Recently Lee Auger (one of the first members) and Ed Marino have tried to recall the veterans that would eat lunch at Wendy's at the start of 2000. As they remember:

There was Mickey Epstein in his red suspenders, who was a B-24 flight engineer and later an engineer for Lear Jets. He would eat by himself and read all three newspapers, <u>Los Angeles Daily News</u>, <u>Los Angeles Times</u>, and <u>The Wall Street Journal</u>, sitting there all afternoon with nobody to bother him.

Fred "Crash" Blechman, a Navy F4U Corsair pilot, and member of the Aircraft Owners Association ate by himself. Perhaps he was writing an article for an aviation journal. Gale Lightner, an Army Air Force Mechanic who served in Germany and Saudi Arabia would always order chili and beans for lunch. Wendy's" was formally formed were: Gene Kosinski, a B-24 Bombardier 15th Air Force WW II, Michael Karatsonji, a Hungarian pilot flying ME 109G in the Luftwaffe, Ed Figueroa, a B-26 radio operator/gunner and Gloria, who was in the Empire State Building when a B-25 crashed into it. Lee Auger remembers Gloria was a mechanic for Pratt and Whitney Engines.

A Gathering of Eagles for a 99 cent Double Stack

One fine day at the turn of the Millennium (the year 2001) Crash Blechman noticed that Mickey Epstein was wearing a Pilot's Association hat and just had to ask why.

Well, that afternoon's conversation seemed to draw in other veterans to tell their stories, such as: "I navigated a so and so bomber over Germany and on my tenth mission they blew part of my tail and landing gear off so we crash landed in a potato field. They put us in a prison camp for over a year; then I escaped to fly again. Yes! I'm still here to tell the story."

The group was not very big—only about ten to fifteen guys. With Ron Ross's permission, they tried to stay out of the way and met at one o'clock every Monday.

As the year wore on Crash drew the first insignia for an organization he called "Wings Over Wendy's" for a magnetic car door emblem. It displayed a gull-wing Corsair fighter flying over a blue and white flag with the label: "Proud Members of Wings Over Wendy's".

The vets came and liked what they heard. Crash ran a tight meeting, no swearing, no sex, no politics and no religious talk, but you could count on the same old jokes at every meeting. By summer the organization's reputation spread, and Dennis McCarthy of the Los Angeles Daily <u>News</u> came to check the group out for one of his news columns. That August, 2002, an article with a picture of ten smiling veterans seemed to attract more than twenty-five new members by December.

In the fall of our lives some patriotic veterans came to share their stories and good company and some old friends disappeared in the clouds of December, never to be forgotten.

Fred R. Kaplan, editor

Others that ate at Wendy's before "Wings Over



A younger Dennis McCarthy wrote the following article for the Los Angeles Daily News, August 27, 2002 that drew veterans throughout the valley to the organization.

High-flown friends, for a buck, seven

What do a former Luftwaffe pilot, a handful of American fighter pilots and bombardiers, and a guy nicknamed "Crash" have in common?

Lunch together every Monday at Wendy's in West Hills.

They call themselves "Wings Over Wendy's"—a funloving, story-swapping, aviation-crazy group of military and civilian pilots from all over the Valley, sharing a 99cent burger lunch and a lot of memories.

"With tax, it's only \$1.07 because the drink's free if your're a senior, which all of us are" says Mickey Epstein, a private pilot who was a flight engineer in B-24 Liberator bombers during World War II.

"Where else you gonna get lunch for a buck, seven? He asks.

Nowhere, the guys agree.

Epstein co-founded "Wings Over Wendy's" a little over a year ago with Fred "Crash" Blechman, of West Hills, who earned his nickname for crashing five Navy fighter planes during his military career.

"The Japanese acknowledged me as an ace" Crash said, laughing, referring to a fighter pilot's designation as an "ace" after shooting down five enemy planes.

Crash crashed ours.

When it's time to pick up the burgers at the front counter, no one in "Wings Over Wendy's" lets Crash carry the tray.

A couple of chairs down from Crash sits Ernie Bankey, a legitimate "double ace, plus" fighter pilot, the guys say. He shot down 11 enemy planes.

Fortunately, Mike Karatsonyi was not in any of them, but he was shot down over Hungary on Aug. 7, 1944, flying a Messerschmitt Me-109 for the Luftwaffe.

Yes, that would be the enemy.

"After the Germans occupied Hungary, I was drafted into service and was burned over 40 percent of my body, after bailing out when I got shot down,"says Mike, who doesn't hold a grudge.

"As soon as we put the guns down, we were able to talk as men," he said. "Pilots are a special breed."

By 1949, Mike, now 80, was already in this country, learning the language and becoming a citizen five years later.

"When did you know the war was almost over, Mike?" asked Ed Figueroa, a former B-26 gunner, and Gene Koseinski, a bombardier on the B-24 Liberators.

"The day I took off with 40 other Luftwaffe pilots, and we were met by 1,200 American planes" he said.

Recruitment into "Wings Over Wendy's" is pretty simple, If you're a pilot, pull up a chair. Private pilots Dave Dodge and Stan Sears did. They stopped by Wendy's one Monday a few months back for lunch, and sat a few tables away listening to a table full of old guys talk about flying.

"You guys pilots?" Dodge asked.

"Yep, pull up a chair", Crash said.

So Dave and Stan did just that, becoming members in good standing of "Wings Over Wendy's".

Bill Caldwell, who saw action in World War II as a member of the 80th Fighter Squadron, stopped by Wendy's for lunch Monday, overheard the guys talking, and wound up pulling up a chair, too.

That's just the way it is with pilots—civilian and military—the men say. They like to hang together and swap stories, even with former enemies.

"Did I mention the drink refills are free too?" Mickey Epstein said.

Great camaraderie and lunch for a buck, seven. Now where are you going to beat that?

If you're a pilot, former or current, and want to pull up

a chair with the guys in "Wings Over Wendy's," stop by the restaurant at 6430 Platt Ave. in West Hills any Monday at 9AM.

Just don't let Crash carry your tray.



Tina Burch/Daily News Staff Photographer

Back row: Jay Dare (WWII bombardier/navigator); Mickey Epstein (WWII B-24 Flight Eng./Gunner); Stan Sears (Artist); Fred "Crash" Blechman (F-4U Corsair Pilot & Writer); Michael Karatsonyi (ME-109G, Luftwaffe Pilot); Gene Koscinski (B-24 Bombardier 15th AF)

Front row: Chuck McClure (B-29 Superfortress Pilot); Ernie Banky (WWII P-51 Ace in-a-day); Ed Figueroa (B-26 Gunner, 21 years USAF); Reagan Miller (B-17 8th AF Pilot) Reprint from the Los Angeles Daily News, August 27, 2002

Member Profiles

SHERMAN TANKED UP, KEEPS ON ROLLING

By Ray Rosenbaum, reporter

All right, it's time for me to write about our chairman, Art Sherman. It has taken me a while because we have a personality problem. I have the personality and he has the problem.

Actually, we are good friends, both of us having been born in Cleveland, in fact in the same hospital, St. Luke's. Guess who was first. Art, by nine years, making him eligible for World War II, or, as he says World War Eleven. I had to wait for the Korean War.

Art became a hotshot bombardier, making countless missions, then a brilliant Intelligence Officer. After serving in the Pentagon, he left the USAAF as a Captain, and then launched a long career here in Los Angeles as a furniture representative.

That activity sometimes keeps him busy on Mondays, so he turns over the leadership to someone else in "Wings Over Wendy's". Just about every week for the past nine years or so, he calls the group together for the Pledge of Allegiance, then proceeds with our lovable raffle, which he describes as the real reason we show up every week. He's wrong. We are there because he directs an unruly group of veterans and a handful of civilians with a firm hand.

Even a loud "Quiet!" from the podium doesn't bother us. We know he has a tough job to do. Aside from running the meeting every week, Art organizes various activities, including a committee, which I prefer to call a board of directors.

He also put together a second Wings group weekly at Uncle Bernie's for those of us a little east of West Hills.

Donald Trump could not call him low energy. Nearing his 95th birthday, he is very active as a volunteer with the L.A. Police Dept., has received numerous awards from the city and county, had lunch with the mayor and has been grand marshal of parades, including our own. If we ever have a Walk of Fame, his footprints would be the first.

Not the tallest of men, Art is delighted to have someone shorter than 5 ft. 6 in. come up to the microphone where he towers over them. Then he proceeds to tell them, "We have many stories, and some of them are true." At his age, he has slowed down a little. But even Jesse Owens lost a step eventually.

Art's batting average is close to one thousand, a little better than our previous chairman co-founder Fred "Crash" Blechman, who worked diligently since we were founded in 2002.

Fred used to boast that he was a Japanese ace, since he downed five of our own planes. Art managed to keep his planes intact while dropping a mess of bombs on the enemy

For that we are grateful and for keeping us intact as well.

A Distinguished Career



Roscoe Frazier Receiving the Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star and now

While many veterans served and then returned home to start their "life's" work as engineers, teachers, lawyers, or pilots, etc., Roscoe W. Frazier, Jr. decided to serve our country in the United States Army from 1959 until 1979. Upon his discharge, this enlisted soldier left as Sergeant First Class.

His assignments included, as member of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell in Kentucky, a parachute jump for President John F. Kennedy in 1960 at Fort Benning, Georgia. At Fort Campbell, the Division Commander was one star General Westmoreland. Roscoe's unit was "C" Company 501st Airborne Infantry. The singer Jimi Hendrix also served in the 501st Airborne Infantry.

While at Fort Campbell, Roscoe made parachute jumps for Olympic Gold medal winner Sgt Eddie Crook a Middle Weight and Wilma Rudolph, a Gold medal winner in the 100 meters. In 1962, his company and others were combat ready standing behind a C-130 during the Cuban missile crisis all ready to take off. The alert was cancelled after three hours.

In a few years, his career took him to Vietnam. He served for two years from 1967 - 1969. As a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, he saw action at Dak-To. This was the first and the largest ground battle in Vietnam in November of 1967. He earned the Bronze Star for Valor. For his participation during the Tet Offensive in November of 1968, Roscoe earned another Bronze Star for Valor.

As a member of the 25th Infantry Division, from March to July in 1964 as a Helicopter Gunner, he earned 5 Air medals. Still in the 25th Infantry Division 1st Battalion (Wolfhounds), he received another Bronze Star. He and his men survived an ambush for three days. This action took place in April of 1966.

He served in Korea patrolling the D.M.Z. with the 2nd Division. He received combat pay during his 80 patrols.

His other assignments were with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There as a member of the 1st Battalion 504th Airborne Infantry he made jumps in Turkey, Vietnam, New Mexico, Fort Campbell, Kentucky and Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

During his 20 year career in the service of his country, he served 5 years and 4 months in a combat zone.

Roscoe W. Frazier, Jr. joins his family's service to this country. His dad served two years in WWII, his brother served 2 years in Vietnam and his son served 2 years in Iraq. His family has a total of 11 years in combat time. They are glad and proud to be **Americans**.

After his military service, Roscoe continued to serve the nation working for the Washington DC Area Transit Authority as a bus operator, Metro Bus Street supervisor and a Metro Rail Station Manager for twenty-two years, 1979-2001. He was totally retired for 16 years but now serves "Wings Over Wendy's" arranging guest speakers for our Monday meetings.

By Ed Moreno, reporter

New Members

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

Bob Blair Herbert Brooks Earnest Dutcher Jonathan Dutcher Loretta Ehrig Carl Joers Ray Johnson Kevin La Rosa II Kevin La Rosa Sr Gordon Maxson Sharon Para-Lavender Rich Poppenberg Kurt Rademacher Perry Sperling

> April Speakers Robert Lanihier



On April 4th Rob Robert Lanihier a former USAF F-4 crew chief and now president of an organization called "The Reel Cowboys" was our guest speaker. He was sponsored by Paul Boghossian. Robert talked about the organization, which is a 501 (c)(3) charities that helps certain charities from the money raised at their annual "Silver Spur Awards" show. This year's (the 19th) show will be held on Sept 16th at the prestigious Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City. A lot of major celebrities are members, including: Hugh O'Brian, Rhonda Fleming, Jon Voight, Robert Wagner, Lou Diamond Phillips, Tom Gossett, Jr. just to name a few. Their Website is http://reelcowboys.org.

Anyone that loves western movies and cowboys is welcome to join.

David Timmerman



On April 11th David Timmerman talked about his father James Timmerman, a B-24 gunner in the 824th BS, 484th BG, 15th AF, Torretta, Italy. David had a a very informative display documenting his father's experiences and the 484th. On one of his father's missions his plane was hit by flak and he bailed out and was captured by the Nazis and taken to Stalag 4 and later was transferred to Stalag 7 and was liberated by the Russians. The display included pictures of Salag's rooms and fence.

It was an informative talk and we could tell that David was very proud of his father's service.

David Loppnow



April 18th David Loppnow, a new member of our organization told us about his military and fascinating family history.

David served in the USN as an airborne Combat Control Officer flying in multi engine aircraft from Hawaii patrolling the Pacific region and the Alaskan chain of islands from 1955 to 1959.

The fascinating part of his talk was his genealogy study of his family history particularly in the Civil War.

Ernest Dutcher



On April 25th another new member spoke to us about his experiences in WWII. Ernest Dutcher has documented his history in a paper of seven chapters titled: <u>I Was There</u>. He served as a Captain, Radar Officer, 88th Troop Carrier Sqdn, 438th TC Group, 9th AF, based at RAF Greenham Commons, England.

He was there for the D-day invasion of France, and then in Gibraltar for Operation Neptune, the invasion of Southern France. Ernest read excerpts from his paper and from memoirs of fellow officers who served in the unit.

Ernest introduced his son and grandson who were in the audience.

Future Activities

Warner Brothers Tour May 24th

Details to follow

Canoga Park Parade May 30th

Sign up with Fred Kaplan for the parade

Community Health Fair June 4

Prince of Peace Church

April Activities

Students Aviation Career Day Van Nuys Airport





Clustered in bunches, at the Wings Over Wendy's exhibit, students were enlightened about WWII and Viet Nam history from the people who were actually there. The event occurred on April 1, 2016 in the Synchro hanger at the Van Nuys airport. The table crew who lectured the students consisted of Barney Leone, Roscoe Frazier, Leon Waldman, Bill Blair, Art Sherman and Mike LaVere. Also contributing their assistance were Lee Auger, Paul Boghossian, Warren Weinstein, Harlis Brend and Peggy Jean Bassett.

Mike LaVere the event leader felt that the presentation was the hit of the show and he wishes to thank all who participated.

Reported by Mike LaVere Pictures by Harlis Brend and Mike LaVere





Condor Squadron Annual Fundraising Dinner Dance and Auction

On April 9th a small group of Wings Over Wendy's were invited to sit at a table purchased by Ron and Diane Ross at the Condor Squadron Annual Fundraising Dinner Dance and Auction held at the Airtel Plaza Hotel at the Van Nuys Airport.



Photo by Phil Aune

Those attending were Art Sherman, Lee Leviton, Phil Aune, Warren Weinstein, Ed Reynolds, Howard Swerdlick, Roscoe Frazier, Lee Auger, Marion Lovelace, Bob Donovan, and Barney Leone.

May Birthdays

Laurence Decuir	May 2, 1922
Gus Manders	May 3, 1921
Milt Weintraub	May 3, 1925
Stanley Salmore	May 3, 1924
Richard DeCurtins	May 5, 1947
Don Goldstein	May 7, 1943
Chuck Simmers	May 8, 1924
Robert Lanthier	May 11, 1950
Malcolm Dipperstein	May 12, 1930
Fred J. Phillips	May 18, 1923
Herb Brooks	May 20, 1919
Maurice Vasquez	May 22, 1968
Frank Barnyak	May 23, 1921
Frank Barnyak Bernard Dickson	May 23, 1921 May 24, 1943
-	•
Bernard Dickson	May 24, 1943

REMINDERS

WOW's monthly food drive is May 2nd!



Submissions to <u>Wings News</u> No later than the Last Wednesday of the Month Email to: Ed_ReynoldsJr@MSN.com

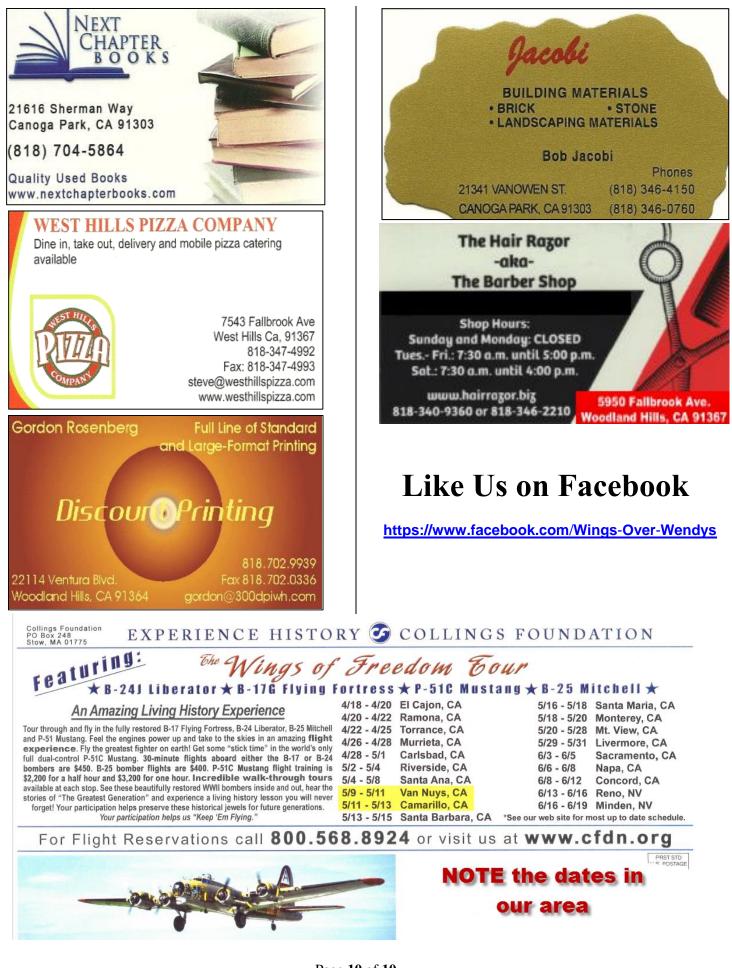
We all want raffle prizes!



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



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