

# Goodbye Wendy's West Hills, Hello Wendy's Woodland Hills

On February 12<sup>th</sup> Wings Over Wendy's held their last meeting at the Platt Village, West Hills Wendy's Restaurant. The group took the occasion to have their bi-annual picture taken. ABC7 News and CBS2/KCAL9 News had TV cameras on site to record the occasion. Over 120 members wearing Wings Over Wendy's monogrammed shirts and hats were in attendance.

The last meeting was started at 09:00am with the Pledge of Allegiance lead by Ron Rubine from Councilmember Mitchell Englander's office. Los Angeles Daily News Columnist, Dennis McCarthy presented a 15-year pin to Lee Auger, our most faithfully attending member. Lee was at the first meetings in 2001 with Fred Blechman and Mickey Epstein and has been attending both the Monday and Tuesday meetings ever since. Dennis then told the group about his interactions with Fred Blechman that lead to his August 2002 article about the meetings. When his article was published attendance grew from a dozen to over 40, then 50 and by August of 2004 close to 100 veterans and veteran supporters had attended meetings and didn't leave much room for the Wendy's after school crowd and the meetings were moved to the morning.

Dennis Zine, who at one time was the Councilmember for the area talked about his association and support of the meetings. He was followed by the current area Councilmember Mitchell Englander telling the crowd what the Platt Village Wendy's and Wings Over Wendy's meant to him growing up in West Hills within walking distance of the village. His father was a WWII disabled veteran.

Raj Dhillon on behalf of State Senator Bob Hertzberg, presented a California State Senate Resolution honoring Ron and Diane Ross.

Ed Reynolds gave a short recap of the history that he compiled from Lee Auger's notes, Dennis McCarthy articles and analysis of historical rosters. The meeting adjourned to take the picture.



Photos by Harlis Brend

**Lee Auger and Dennis McCarthy**

Photos by Harlis Brend

**Dennis Zine and Mitchell Englander**

**Ron & Diane Ross accept the Senate Resolution from  
Raj Dhillon, Senator Hertzberg's staff**

# News Coverage of Event

## **Dennis McCarthy: Wings over Wendy's takes flight from West Hills.**

### **But these WWII vets have a place to land.**



**Wings over Wendy's group goodbye photo**

*"As soon as we put the guns down, we were able to talk as men." – Mike "Bomber" Karatsonyi, who flew with the German Luftwaffe in World War II.*

*It was moving day Monday for "Wings Over Wendy's," that raucous, lovable group of old military flyboys and aviation veterans who have been meeting for coffee and camaraderie every Monday morning for the last 16 years at the Wendy's on Platt Avenue in West Hills.*

*Ron Ross, owner of the restaurant, lost his lease to an El Pollo Loco, which was willing to pay double the \$10,000-a-month rent Ross was paying for the location. It seems there's a shortage of restaurants with drive-thru's in the Valley, so companies looking for potential sites check when leases are coming up for renewal, and swoop in offering a lot more money, Ron said.*

*Ross owns another Wendy's at 22611 Ventura Boulevard in Woodland Hills, and that's where the group will meet from now on because, well, "Wings Over El Pollo Loco" doesn't quite get it.*

*It seems like only yesterday I was sitting in the city room on a slow Monday morning in 2002 praying for a good column to drop in my lap when a guy named Fred "Crash" Blechman called and invited me to join him and a few of his World War II buddies at Wendy's for the 99-cent senior lunch special — a cheeseburger, fries, and drink of your choice.*

*Now how can you pass up an opportunity like that? You can't. Turns out the guys were starting a club, and they wanted my help getting the word out.*

*Crash, I came to find out, earned his dubious nickname for crashing five Navy fighter planes during his four years of military service. He was great on take-offs, but his landings were a little shaky.*

*Sitting with Crash was Mickey Epstein, a B-24 Liberator flight engineer, Ed Figueroa, a B-26 gunner, Ernie Bankey,*

*an "ace" pilot who shot down 11 enemy planes, and Mike "Bomber" Karatsonyi, who fortunately wasn't one of them.*

*Bomber flew a Messerschmitt Me-109 in the war with the Luftwaffe. After the Germans occupied Hungary, Mike was told either fly with us or go to a concentration camp.*

*And now here he was, 60-plus years later, having a cheeseburger, and catching up on old times with guys who wanted to shoot him out of the sky.*

*"No hard feelings?" I asked the guys. None, they said.*

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

*He said he knew the war was almost over the day he took off with 40 other Luftwaffe pilots, and they were met by 1,200 American planes.*

*"Mike defended his country and did what he had to do. We all respected that," said Lee Auger, who received his 16-year pin Monday as the longest member of "Wings Over Wendy's" still living.*

*The column in 2002 found its way into the homes of hundreds of former aviation veterans in LA County. The next week 20 more guys showed up for lunch, then 40 more. The group grew so large there was no room for regular customers, so Ross had to move the luncheon meetings to morning breakfast, which wasn't easy because he wasn't open for breakfast.*

*But for his Wings guys, he staffed and opened his restaurant two hours early. He didn't have to. He wasn't making a dime on them. Coffee was free.*

*But Ross knew from their wives and children how important it was for these old warriors to get out of their homes for a few hours every week and hang out together swapping old war stories.*

*"It's an honor to have them in my restaurant," Ross has said many times.*

*Today, "Wings Over Wendy's" has more than 300 members, of which about 100 show up for coffee and camaraderie every Monday morning. They also added a Tuesday morning meeting at the Tarzana Community and Cultural Center, 19130 Ventura Blvd from 9:30 a.m. until 11 a.m.*

*All military veterans, not just aviators, are now invited to join, said the group's president Ed Reynolds, who can be reached at (818) 884-4013 for more information.*

*"These meetings have become lifelines to many of the guys, especially the ones who have lost their wives and were just sitting at home vegetating," said Art Sherman, a B-24 bombardier and intelligence officer in World War II.*

*(Continued Page3)*



*"Our members come from all over Los Angeles County to finally talk about the war experiences they could never talk to their families about. It's been a lifesaver for them, including me."*

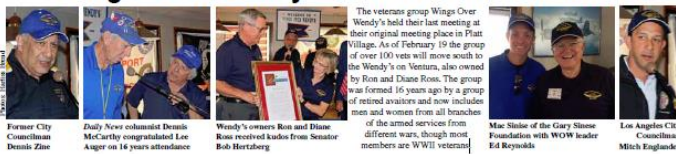
*Yeah, I got lucky that day Crash called. That 99-cent senior special turned out to be the best lunch I ever had.*

By DENNIS MCCARTHY Los Angeles Daily News  
February 16, 2018

Page 6, Valley News Group, February 15, 2018



### "Wings Over Wendy's" Flies South This Month



The veterans group Wings Over Wendy's held their last meeting at their original meeting place in Platt Village. As of February 19, the group of over 100 vets will move south to the Wendy's on Ventura, also owned by Ron and Diane Ross. The group was formed 16 years ago by a group of retired aviators and now includes men and women from all branches of the armed services from different wars, though most members are WWII veterans.

## ABC7 TV News



Ed Reynolds was interviewed on ABC7

## CBS2/KCAL9



Art Sherman was interviewed on CBS2/KCAL9

## Council District 12 COMMUNITY NEWS A Proper Send Off for Local Heroes...

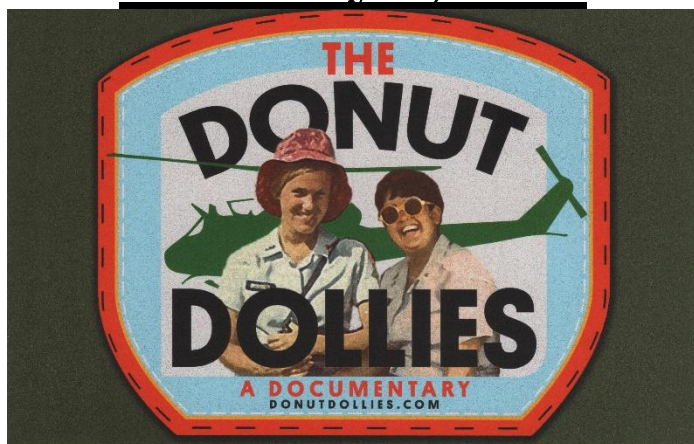


This week brought a bittersweet moment to West Hills as we celebrated the final Wings over Wendy's meeting before the group moves their events to a new location on Ventura Blvd.

It's been an honor to be the host Council District for this vital Veteran's organization which serves as a social and networking opportunity for returning servicemembers from World War II through Operation Iraqi Freedom. In addition to serving their country, the 350-strong membership remains active in serving our communities. The new location will be the Wendy's restaurant located at 22511 Ventura Blvd in Woodland Hills where they will continue their weekly Monday meetings. And while we're sad to see the organization move out of Council District 12, it will forever be a point of pride that it all began here in West Hills.

# February Speakers

## February 5, 2018



## **Norm Anderson, Director**

On February 5, 2018, Norm Anderson spoke to the group and showed a video about his project to produce a document on the untold story of the American women who volunteered to go to Vietnam on an impossible mission: help the troops forget about the war.

Norm's project is to document the story of a group of amazing American women who volunteered to serve during the Vietnam War through the Red Cross as part of a program called Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas (SRAO), better known by our brave military men as "The Donut Dollies." Armed with nothing but cookies and home-made entertainment programs, the Donut Dollies risked their lives every day as they tried to fulfill their mission and cheer up the US troops. Despite their service and sacrifice, their stories and contributions in Vietnam have gone largely unnoticed and unappreciated. Norm is hoping his project will change that.

He told us his project is truly a labor of love, as one of the Donut Dollies – Dorset – happens to be his Mom and the other is her best friend, "Auntie Mary."

As he prepared to be a speaker at Wings Over Wendy's he discovered that the Internet domain name: [www.wingsoverwendys.com](http://www.wingsoverwendys.com) was not active so he purchased the rights and gave it to the group. Ed Reynolds was granted access to both the domain name and to use the Donutdollies.com Web Hosting Service. In his spare time Ed has started to develop a Wings Over Wendy's website.

## February 12, 2018

## **Last Meeting in West Hills**

The speakers on February 12<sup>th</sup> are documented on page one: Lee Auger, Dennis McCarthy, Dennis Zine, Mitchell Englander, Raj Dhillon, Ron and Diane Ross and Ed

Reynolds. As we waited for Howard and his crew to set up the chairs outside and Skip DeYoung set up his camera, Ed Reynolds presented the following short recap of the history that he compiled from Lee Auger's notes, Dennis McCarthy articles and analysis of historical rosters:

First recorded meeting: JUN 11, 2001 included:

Lee Auger  
Fred "Crash" Blechman  
Stan Dean  
Mickey Epstein,

The group decided to name themselves "Wings Over Wendy's" on AUG 13, 2001

Ed Figueroa joined the group on OCT 1, 2001  
Mike Karatsonyi joined the group DEC 31, 2001

Dennis McCarthy wrote an article about the group on AUG 27, 2002. That establishes the date of 2002.

The next month 25 new members join including:

Allan Hitterdal  
Art Sherman  
Bud Lindahl  
Don Foster  
Jimmy Weldon  
Steve Politis

By AUG 16, 2004 Over 50 people were attending the "lunch" meetings and Ron Ross asked "Crash" to move the meetings to the morning. Attendance exploded to over 100 in 2006.

"Crash" Blechman flew west on NOV 14, 2007. Dennis McCarthy wrote an article about his passing. Art Sherman took over leading the meetings and the roster grew to over 200 names. In JUN 2016, Ed Reynolds took over leading the meetings.

Overall 535 people have appeared on at least one roster. 333 on current roster, 30 inactive, 100 honorees and over 120 have flown west.

### **CURRENT BREAKDOWN OF THE ROSTER**

#### **Veterans**

USAAF/USAF	83	WWII 33
USA	81	WWII 20
USN:	67	WWII 17
USMC	15	WWII 4
USCG	6	WWII 1
Foreign veterans	6	WWII 1

#### **Non-Veterans**

Others (pilots, engineers, etc.)	56
Member's widows	7
Member's wives	8
Veteran's Supporters	31
Honorary	103



# **February 19, 2018**

## **First Meeting in Woodland Hills**

The first meeting in Woodland Hills took place on February 19<sup>th</sup>. The week between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> had a lot of activity to prepare for the new meeting environment. Fred Kaplan removed all the pictures and plaques from the West Hills restaurant and with Bill Ratner hung a number of them on the wall of the new facility. Ron Ross purchased 20 folding chairs to enable us to seat 100 people in the room.

Howard Swerdlick, Lee Auger and Ed Reynolds removed the 55-inch TV from West Hills and stored it in Ed's truck for future installation in the new facility. Ed fixed up a cabinet with a lock to store our meeting sound system, DVD Player, tablecloth and other meeting support items.

Sunday night, February 18<sup>th</sup> Howard, Ed, David Greenburg, Peter Helm and Bill Winstead rearranged the tables and chairs in the new meeting room to have 5 rows of tables similar to the old meeting setup with a head table along the wall.

Monday morning a crew including Tom Villanueva, Bob Donovan, David Greenberg, Paul Boghossian, Maurice Vasquez, Ron Boggess and others arrived early to assist Ed, Howard and Lee, complete the setup of the room and direct parking. Fred and Bill hung the flags and clocks.

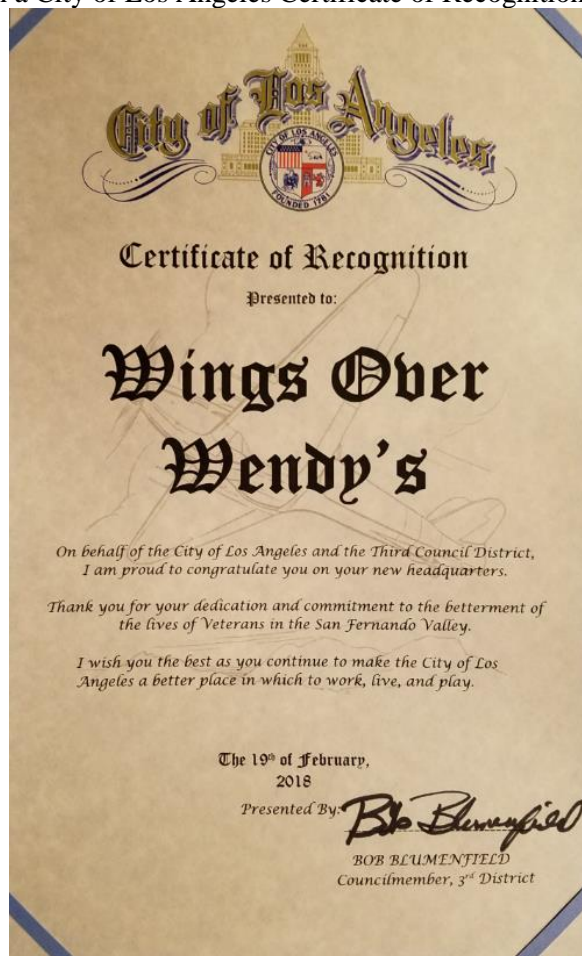
Our guest speaker, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield arrived at 8 am and even assisted with hanging some of the flags. The room filled to over 100 and at 08:30am Ed called the meeting order so the Councilmember could speak and leave for a 9:15 appointment.

### **Councilmember Bob Blumenfield**



Photo by Harlis Brend

The Councilmember started by presenting the group with a City of Los Angeles Certificate of Recognition



He then gave the crowd an update on his activities, initiatives and answered questions from the audience.

The raffle was suspended, and Diane Ross introduced the next guest:

### **Mike Machat**

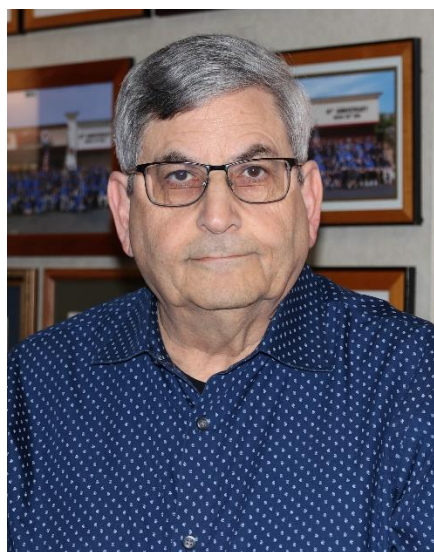


Photo by Harlis Brend  
(Continued Page6)

Mike Machat is an American aviation artist, author, and historian who has dedicated his career to the preservation and documentation of aviation history. Mike Machat's original aviation paintings and lithographs capture the rich legacy of America's aviation history today.

He was fascinated with drawing airplanes since his early childhood on Long Island, New York during the 1950s. As a teenager, he spent endless hours sketching at local area airports, trading his artwork for flights in all types of aircraft and eventually earning his private and commercial licenses.

After attending Pratt Institute, Mike served in the U.S. Air Force and then relocated to Los Angeles earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts from California State University, Long Beach, and joining the Douglas Aircraft Company as a Staff Illustrator. In 1984, he established his own aviation art studio and was elected first president of the American Society of Aviation Artists. As a member of the Society of Illustrators of New York and Los Angeles, Mike won numerous awards in many national aviation art competitions.

Noted for his extensive work in commercial aviation, Mike's paintings are also displayed in many airline corporate headquarters throughout the world including a mural painted in the terminal building of the Bob Hope Airport in Burbank, California. His client list included Airbus Industrie, McDonnell Douglas, Pan American World Airways, Delta, Continental, Flying Tigers, and NASA among many others.

Mike Machat's art career spanned the years from 1975 through 2001, during which time he produced 250 major works, built a strong collector following, and emerged as one of America's most well-known aviation artists. Now retired, he lives in Woodland Hills, California with his wife Sheri and their two daughters.

To start our tenure in Woodland Hills off to a great start, Mike donated his famous picture "SUPERSONIC PALETTE: The Art of Flight" autographed by Clyde East, to hang on the south wall of the Wendy's Restaurant.



## **February 26, 2018**

### **Ed Barkett**

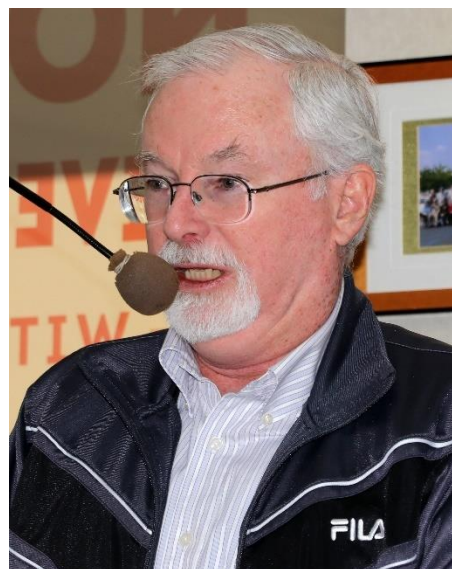


Photo by Harlis Brend

Our speaker on February 26<sup>th</sup> was Ed Barkett who had spoken in December 2016 about his research on the Canoga Park High School graduates and non-graduates that served in the military. His talk had told us about WWII era so on the 26<sup>th</sup> he picked up at the time of the Korean War. A variety of Valley young men, not only from Canoga Park but also from the surrounding communities served in the Korean Conflict. Ed provided the details on their campaigns and in many cases the circumstances of their death. One young man was awarded the Medal of Honor and at the request of the audience, Ed read the citation.

We invited Ed to return at a future date to cover the Cold War and Vietnam War service by men and women from the local area.

## **New Magnetic Logo**



New magnetic logo, the same size as the bumper stickers is now available for **\$5.00**.



# Profiles

## Kent Kellegrew

By Ed Moreno



Photo by Harlis Brend

## A 81mm Mortar Wireman

As a few of us glanced at Kent's book on the history of the 96th Infantry Division, he kept pointing to the photos of the tombs on the Okinawan landscape. The islanders buried their family members in these tombs. It was the oldest virgin in the family who cleaned the flesh from the bones. The bones of the loved one were placed in a very large jar. Jewelry, perhaps gold teeth and other items of value to the deceased were included in the large urn/jar.

There were two shapes of tombs on the island. One was shaped like the shell of a turtle. This shape displayed the Chinese belief of long life. The Chinese have influenced the Okinawans since the 400 century A.D. The Japanese culture has only been there the last few centuries. Tombs shaped like a woman's womb symbolized re-birth. This was a Japanese belief. During WWII the Japanese mined the tombs. GI's seeking relics to send home would enter the tomb and then get blown up.

He was born in Duluth, Minnesota on September 5, 1923. His father sold mining equipment to companies in the Mesabi Range area where the largest deposit of iron ore exists in the United States.

After three years living in Duluth, his family moved to Kansas City, Missouri for three years. There, his dad sold stationary diesel engines. At the onset of the depression, his father lost this job. They moved to Salinas, Kansas. Kent attended school from the 2nd grade to the 12th grade. After high school graduation he began to work with his dad. Jobs were scarce in 1942 so Kent moved to

Glendale, California. There he found a job at Lockheed Aircraft, building P-38 aircraft. He was an operator of an eight-foot sheer. He was drafted in 1942 and sent to Camp Swift in Texas and later to Wake Forest just south of Chicago. Soon he was shipped to the Pacific and saw action on Leyte in the Philippines and then the island of Okinawa.

Kent showed us his scars on his upper right arm and his left arm where he was shot during fighting in Okinawa. He was sent to a hospital in Guam. Telling us that all the other patients in his ward were suffering from work related injuries and were shocked to see a combat casualty that arrived in muddy clothes, unshaven who hadn't had a bath or shower in weeks.

After he recovered from his injury in the hospital on Guam he was assigned to a combat unit and sent to Leyte. Kent also served on Saipan and other engagements in the Pacific. After the hostilities he returned with several medals. A few include: The Purple Heart, Presidential Citation with two Bronze Stars, Philippine Liberation, the WWII Victory Medal and even the Good Conduct medal.

When he was discharged and returned home, supporting the family was his most important activity. During the years 1948 and 1949 he attended Los Angeles Community College and the University of Southern California. With his B.S. in Sociology he chose to become an elementary school teacher. This 81 mm mortar wireman veteran taught at many elementary schools in the San Fernando Valley. A few include Morningside, Cantara, Hubbard, Enaida Way, etc. Concurrently, he worked at Bekins Moving Company for 30 years in his free time and summers. Kent is proud of his two sons. One is a Superior Court Judge in Ventura and his second works for a railroad company,

## Flight to Catalina Airport in the Sky, An adventure story – April 7, 1995

By Anarg Z. Frangos



Photo by Harlis Brend

## Anarg and his Moony N711DF

(Continued page 8)

The Mooney engine purred to life, and we taxied to the takeoff end of Runway 04 to wait for the "German's" report on the tops. It came with a Luftwaffe pilot's accent. "Za tops iss at 2700 feet. No pwoblem!" I responded, "Ja vold! Schpitfires at 12 o'clock!" His return chuckle filled the headsets. Anyway, with a tight sphincter muscle, and catching a glimpse of Ted's wide-open eyes, I pushed the throttle home, and the Mooney roared to life (or at least with as much of a roar as 180 hp can make). We raced down the runway in zero-zero, and just held the Directional



It's a good cross-country airplane. It is really comfortable and fast for its age. "I love everything about this plane, especially the way she lands. The landing and approach fit together nicely, making it easy to put on the backsides of the main wheels and keep the nose in the air while it slows down."

The A-20, for instance, uses the same: engines, the Wright R-2600-Twin Cyclone radial, 1,600 hp each propellers, top Turrets and internal System components as the B-25. (Though it is slightly smaller than the B-25) This eases maintenance (to a certain extent.)

The "G" model A-20 had a solid gunnery nose with six Browning .50 calibers.

The Havoc was a single pilot airplane, no copilot, with only a three-man crew. The pilot was also the bombardier, and radio/ventral gunner. A-20's were primarily ground attack bombers, however, they participated in level bombing missions, with the lead plane being an A-20J, which featured a glass nose, housing a bombardier and his Norden bomb sight. (Taking a moment to remember our WOW member Bill Blair, gone West, who prized his Norden and shared it at numerous WOW events.) The formation dropped its bombs when the lead aircraft did.

Pre-flying an A-20 isn't that much different than pre-flying a B-25, even though they are built by different companies. The Havoc's cockpit is only accessible from the top of the airplane, as opposed to up through the belly as with most other bombers. In fact, there is no access from inside the fuselage. Getting into the cockpit is no fun; there are four steps built into the back of the left wing. With each step being pulled out for use, they are badly spaced, making climbing up on the airplane difficult. Once on top of the plane the rest is easy. The hatch is quite long and opens up from the windshield to well behind the seat. You can step forward onto a little walkway and walk forward and step down onto the seat. The Havoc is quite maneuverable and much lighter and much lighter than its sister, the B-25 with almost the same power, so it accelerates well. They are for all intents and purposes contemporaries because their design periods overlapped. She's a bundle of dynamite, trim and sleek and a good-looking airplane. Researched and written by Peggy Jean Bassett.

## Supermarine Spitfire



## Reginald Joseph (RJ) Mitchell-Aeronautical engineer, pilot and designer of the iconic Spitfire

"RJ" thought the name "Spitfire" was damned silly, and wanted to call it the SHREW, however Spitfire was suggested by his boss - who called his daughter a "little spitfire" for her fiery personality. That iconic name has become synonymous with the RAF's victory during the "Battle of Britain". Aviation experts claim others were also heavily involved in the design and Mitchell was not even allowed to choose its name. The naming of airplanes is not usually taken by the designer anyway. The first Spitfire flight was in March, 1936. While Mitchell was there for the first flight, he died in June 1937-fifteen months after the first flight of the Spitfire, during which time all the development work by other people took place, while he was out of the game, more than 20,000 of the feared aircraft were built between 1938 and 1948. R.J. Mitchell is credited with creating revolutionary aircraft throughout the 1920's. RJ broke several world speed records and won the Schneider Trophy three times in a row.

The Schneider trophy was awarded annually to the winner of a race for seaplanes and flying boats.

The Supermarine Spitfire is a single seat fighter aircraft. It was strategically important in World War II and it was used by the Royal Air Force and many other allied countries before and during World War II. The Spitfire was built in many variants, using several wing variations and was produced in greater numbers than any other British aircraft. The Spitfire model LF Mk IX continues to be popular among enthusiasts. About 54 remain airworthy and many more are static exhibitions in aviation museums throughout the world. The Spitfire LF Mk IX had a distinctive elliptical wing, with the thinnest possible cross-section, helping to give the aircraft a higher top speed. It is considered by most to be the perfect Spitfire due to its balanced all-round performance and impressive statistics. The last of the Merlin Engine Spitfires before progressing on to the Griffon powered variants, it has the perfect balance of turning performance (second only to its Japanese counterparts) as well as its "Boom and Zoom" capability that becomes more possible with later model Spitfires.

Researched by Plane Peggy.

## Leaving on a Jet Plane



John Denver  
(Continued Page 10)





Most American military observers were unimpressed, but some officers felt differently. Even before the American Expeditionary Force arrived in France, General Pershing took a liking to the tank. Seeing the metal monster in action, Pershing ordered the formation of an American tank corps before the end of 1917.

In the spirit of cooperation, Britain and France shared tank designs, and the U.S. were interested in combining the British heavy and French light tank doctrines into one force, using them to punch through an enemy's frontline.

Two men, who would go on to become major figures during the next world war, began fitting this new battlefield beast into the U.S. army's ranks. In France Captain George Patton worked hard to assemble the U.S. Tank Corps, while in the U.S., Captain Dwight Eisenhower helped create the U.S. Tank Service.



George Patton standing next to a FT tank, summer 1918.

Patton pushed hard for his assignment to the Tank Corps and was eventually ordered to establish a light tank school to train the first generation of American tankers. Patton and his men began training with the French Renault FT. The FT was a two-man light tank, the first to incorporate a turret which could rotate 360-degrees, armed with a 37mm cannon. Designed to be supported by infantry, the FT reached top speeds at around 6mph. It wasn't blazing fast, but it could provide mobile firepower wherever, whenever.

Patton admired the FT's speed, mobility, maneuverability, and its ability to knock over small trees. Patton also shaped the Army's tank strategy, writing a highly detailed report on how to best deploy tanks.

In December 1917, Colonel Samuel Rockenbach was placed in command of the still tankless U.S. Tank Corps. Rockenbach and Patton faced a massive challenge getting the Corps into action.

A tank corps without tanks, Patton's men instead trained with wooden mock-ups, learning how to work their guns in the FT's confined turret. When the first tanks finally arrived, the tank crews quickly got to grips with their new vehicles.



American troops going to the battle line in the Forest of Argonne, Sept. 26, 1918.

The roar of the tank's engine made communication impossible, so the tank's commander/gunner had to

communicate with the driver through a system of kicks to signal stop, reverse, left, and right. By March 1918, Patton had trained his first batch of tank crews, and with his recent promotion to Lt. Colonel, he formed the 1st Light Tank Battalion.

Following the FT design, the Army needed thousands of tanks. While Ford developed the M1918, a 3-ton light tank, the FT was the first tank to be manufactured in America. The M1917, as it became known, didn't reach France before peace broke out in Europe, so U.S. troops used French-made Renault FTs to finish out the war.

These tanks saw action for the first time during the Battle of Saint-Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in September 1918. Patton, now commanding the 1st Tank Brigade, led 144 tanks into battle.

At Saint-Mihiel many of Patton's tanks got bogged down in sodden French soil, but enough pushed on to help capture several key positions. During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive Patton insisted on leading from the front, he was wounded in the thigh and the war ended soon after, much to Patton's disappointment.

After World War 1 military spending declined immensely. While American tanks proved their worth during the fighting, the Tank Corps shrank from 20,000 men in November 1918, to just under 300 by 1919. By 1920 the Tank Corps was no longer an independent branch of the Army, and America stopped most experimentation and development tanks as the M1917 slowly became obsolete.

Contrary to how Patton had seen tanks as the new cavalry, the Army instead focused on linking them to the infantry. With funding for new tanks drying up, Patton transferred back to the cavalry in despair, while Eisenhower took a staff job a year later.

Between wars, American tank development pattered along, only producing two light tank designs, the M1 and M2. These light tanks weighed less than 15 tons with the machine gun-armed M1 being originally called a 'combat car.' The M2, armed with a 37mm gun and several .30-caliber machine guns, had slightly better armor and its 250-horsepower engine reached speeds of 35mph.

Throughout the 1930s, the M2 eventually evolved into the M2A4, a tank with thicker armor and better weaponry, which eventually saw action during the Guadalcanal campaign. By 1939 the U.S. was building a heavier version of the M2 light tank, unimaginatively called the M2 medium tank. Just over 100 of these tanks were built before another world war shifted production to other medium tanks. As the world once again descended into conflict, the Army realized the potential of the tank. Eventually, it would be America's industrial capacity that would overwhelm Nazi Germany, an enemy that wielded tank warfare with deadly efficiency during the Blitzkrieg.

(Continued Page 12)

## The American Tank and a World at War

In December 1941, the U.S. officially entered the single greatest armed conflict in human history. During the war, American factories would produce tens of thousands of tanks, which would gain legendary status.

A year before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Lend-Lease agreements supplied Britain and the Soviet Union with over \$50 billion (nearly \$700 billion today) worth of war material including aircraft, warships, vehicles, and tanks. Seeming to make up for lost time, the U.S. made a staggering 90,000 tanks from 1939 to 1945.

The first American tanks saw action not with U.S. soldiers at all, but with the British. Nearly 200 M3 Stuart light tanks took part in Operation Crusader in North Africa. But the tanks failed to penetrate German armor. Instead, they were re-deployed in the Pacific where no Japanese armor would challenge them.

It would be the M3 Lee, a medium tank, that would eventually supply the British in North Africa. Receiving nearly 3,000 of the new tanks, the British deployed the M3 Lee in May 1942.

Designed only two years earlier, the M3 Lee was really a stopgap measure. While the Lee was liked for its powerful 75mm main gun, its 51mm frontal armor it was too tall, making it an easy target. Another big issue was its archaic sponson-mounted main gun, which was reminiscent of the tanks of World War I, and it performed poorly in rough country.

Although the Lee remained in service throughout the war, it was the M4 Sherman, an all-round medium tank, that would become a legend on the battlefield. The Sherman, designed in 1940 to address the Lee's shortcomings, coming with a 75mm gun as standard it had a five man crew.

Despite the cramped conditions, the M4 evolved rapidly throughout the war with six tank variants and a dozen specialized vehicles like mine exploders, duplex drive amphibious Shermans, rocket launching tanks, flamethrower tanks, and tank recovery vehicles.

Not only was the M4 versatile it was well suited for mass production with nearly 50,000 made between 1942 and 1945. It also helped that the Sherman proved to be a very reliable and easy to maintain in the field, a feature that quickly endeared the tank to its crews. The M4 went on to become the armored spearhead in North Africa, Italy, the Pacific, and Europe.

Patton, a military man intimately familiar with U.S. tanks, put them to good use. He led the Third Army during its breakout from the Normandy beachhead and its dash across France.

But despite its immeasurable benefits compared to the M3 Lee, the Sherman was still incredibly noisy, making navigation difficult, its armor unevenly distributed, its weapons stowage was also a problem because a well-placed

enemy shell could ignite it, causing the tank to burn and explode. This unfortunate side effect eventually earned the Sherman tank a nickname by the German army - "Tommy cooker." That problem was fixed by stowing the ammunition in "wet storage" with water jackets protecting the shells.

American tanks in the hands of Allied tank crews were instrumental in driving back the Wehrmacht, liberating Western Europe and cutting a swathe through the island chains of the Pacific. While not the most technically advanced tanks on the battlefield, they were able to take on the enemy.

## The Cold War Heats Up



USMC 1st Div M46 Patton tank in North Korea, 1950

Despite its shortcomings, the Sherman remained in service during the Korean War alongside newer tanks including the M26 Pershing, which briefly saw action at the end of World War II, and the M46 Patton. The Patton, the first in a family of tanks named after the legendary General Patton, it boasted a larger 90mm gun, thicker armor, and a more powerful V12 engine.

During the early phases of the war, American tanks went up against Soviet-supplied North Korean T-34s. But these were quickly dealt with and tank battles became few and far between. Instead, tanks increasingly acted as infantry support. In this role the Pershing, with its unreliable transmission, was eventually replaced by the M46.

Throughout the Cold War most of America's tanks were deployed in Western Europe, facing down the threat of a massive Soviet armored offensive. But in the mid-1960s the Cold War began to heat up in southeast Asia and some American tanks found themselves fighting in Vietnam.

With the lessons learned in Korea, the Army developed new tanks, the M47 and M48 Pattons. While the M47 never saw action with the Army, it was widely exported to America's NATO allies before a further improved M48 was introduced in 1952. The M48 became the workhorse tank of the Vietnam war along with the M551 Sheridan light tank.

In 1961, the U.S. introduced the M60, ushering in a new concept, the Main Battle Tank (MBT). The Army envisaged the MBT as a universal tank that was maneuverable, packed a punch, and was well-armored yet light.

(Continued Page 13)



Using new lighter composite armor, more efficient engines, and improved suspension, the MBT combined the firepower and protection of a heavy tank with the mobility of a medium tank. The M60 wasn't deployed to Vietnam, instead, the U.S. sent its newest tank to West Germany.

Packing a 105mm gun, armor up to 10 inches thick, and a 750 brake-horsepower engine, the M60 could travel up to 30mph and only required a crew of four. The Army fielded three major variants with the last, the M60A3, meeting a similar fate as the M48 - rendered obsolete in the 1990s by the M1 Abrams.

### Enter the M1



Development of a new Main Battle Tank to replace the aging M60 Patton began in the 1970s, and after a decade of research and development the M1 Abrams was born.

Boasting new lighter composite armor, a 105mm (later 120mm) gun, and a top road speed of 45mph the M1 was designed to match the formidable new Soviet T-80 MBT. The Abrams has a four-man crew and could be fitted with explosive reactive armor that can destroy warheads.

The 1990 Gulf War saw the Abrams go into action for the first time alongside the older M60 Patton. One of the new technologies built into the Abrams was GPS. It was an invaluable tool during the Gulf campaign, making it much simpler for U.S. forces to navigate the vast distances of the Iraqi deserts.

The new M1A2 Abrams SEP v3 battle tank, is the latest and greatest U.S. tank. It was delivered to the Army on Oct. 4, 2017.

Since 2003, the U.S. has increasingly fought insurgent forces that don't have tanks, and tanks are unsuited to counter-insurgency operations like those in Afghanistan. It's like having a hammer but needing a scalpel.

However, Russia and China continue to develop their own tank arsenals with Russia's high-tech new T-14 Armata and China's VT4.

In October 2017, the U.S. Army received the first of its new enhanced M1A2s which have improvements to counter IEDs, better communications, and enhanced power generation systems.

New technologies like railguns, drones and ultralight armor will be the key to creating an incrementally better tank than the Abrams, but this is some years away.

While the U.S. was quick to realize the tank's potential, they have not always been at the forefront of tank development. Lagging behind during the interwar period, it was only America's impressive industrial capacity that enabled them to catch up and gain an edge.

But since V-E Day in 1945, the U.S. has led the way, developing some of the most successful tanks of the Cold War along with the modern and formidable M1 Abrams.

With all the advanced tools of modern warfare, the tank still remains the U.S. military's armored spearhead on the ground - just as it had been a century earlier on the trench-laden fields of France.

The Evolution of the American Tank was Provided by Hearst Communications, Inc

## Subject: radar

# TOP THIS ONE FOR A SPEEDING TICKET IN KINGSVILLE, TEXAS

Two Texas Highway Patrol Officers were conducting speeding enforcement on Highway 77, just south of Kingsville, Texas.

One of the officers was using a hand-held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the town of Kingsville.

The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 300 miles per hour and climbing.

The officer attempted to reset the radar gun, but it would not reset and then it suddenly turned off.

Just then a deafening roar over the mesquite tree tops on Highway 77 revealed that the radar had in fact, locked on to a USMC F/A-18 Hornet which was engaged in a low-flying exercise near its Naval Air home base location in Kingsville.



(Continued page 14)

Back at the Texas Highway Patrol Headquarters in Corpus Christi the Patrol Captain fired off a complaint to the U. S. Naval Base Commander in Kingsville for shutting down his equipment.

The reply came back in true USMC style:

"Thank you for your letter . . .

"You may be interested to know that the tactical computer in the Hornet had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked onto your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it, which is why it shut down."

"Furthermore, an air-to-ground missile aboard the fully armed aircraft had also automatically locked on to your equipment's location."

"Fortunately, the marine pilot flying the Hornet recognized the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile system alert status and was able to override the automated defense system before the missile was launched to destroy the hostile radar position on the side of Highway 77, south of Kingsville."

"The pilot suggests you cover your mouths when swearing at them, since the video systems on these jets are very high tech."

"Sergeant Johnson, the officer holding the radar gun, should get his dentist to check his left molar. It appears the filling is loose.

Also, the snap is broken on his holster."

Semper Fi



## We all want raffle prizes!

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

Suggested Items: Military books, magazines, DVD's, tools, etc. **Thank you!**



## March Scheduled Tour



**Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Free bus and admission, including the  
IMAX Hurricane 3D show**

**Bus leaves from Platt Village 9:45am**

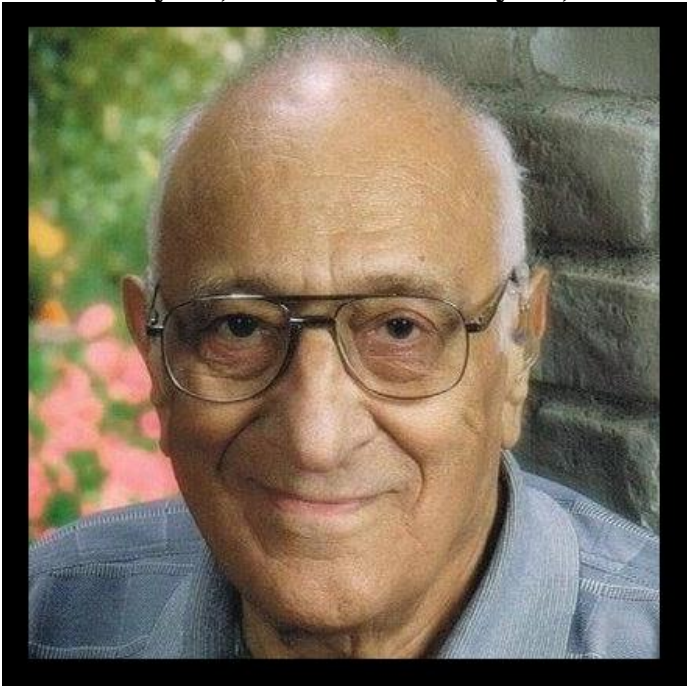
**Sign-up by March 15  
with Warren Weinstein**



## In Memoriam

### **Steve Politis**

**January 11, 1917 to February 25, 2018**



@Wings Over Wendy's

@Operation Gratitude

## **101 years old!**

On February 25, 2018, the world lost one of the "greatest generation". A man who served, not just in WWII, but continued to serve his nation as an engineer on the first lunar landing, his community as a school teacher, and math tutor, the military and first responders with his volunteer work at Operation Gratitude and his fellow veterans by faithfully attending Wings Over Wendy's meetings and events for over 15 years. He drove himself to meetings until he was 100 years and 9 months old.

Visitation Services are scheduled on March 4<sup>th</sup> 6 to 7:30pm followed by Trisagion at 7 to 7:30pm:

### **BASTIAN AND PERROTT, OSWALD MORTUARY**

18728 Parthenia Street  
Northridge, CA 91324

Funeral Service is scheduled March 5<sup>th</sup>, 10 to 11am at:

### **ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

9501 Balboa Blvd  
Northridge, CA 91324

Burial is scheduled on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 11:30am to 12pm

### **OAKWOOD MEMORIAL PARK**

22601 Lassen St.  
Chatsworth, CA 91311

## **Los Angeles City Council Adjourning Motion Feb 28**

On February 28, 2018, Councilmember Mitchell Englander read the following adjourning motion:

*Today, I would like to adjourn in memory of US Army Officer Steve Politis.*

*Steve Politis passed away this month on February 25th, 2018.*

*In January, Steve Politis celebrated his 101st Birthday with his family and friends from Wings Over Wendy's, the veteran organization he has been involved with since 2002.*

*At 101, Steve was the group's oldest member.*

*Steve Politis was heavily involved in the community, from helping grow Wings Over Wendy's to the now 100+ members it has today to volunteering for Operation Gratitude, an organization that sends care packages to service men and women around the world.*

*Two years ago, Steve renewed his driver's license and was proud to announce that he scored 100% on the written test, aced the eye chart, and as always, checked off the organ donor box – although he admitted he wasn't sure if anyone would be interested in a 99-year-old man's organs.*

*Most knew Steve to had an incredible mind and a big heart.*

*His optimism showed even throughout the political season...*

*When people would talk about what is wrong with this country, Steve would discuss what is **right!***

(Continued page 15)

*Steve graduated from Stuyvesant High School in New York in the middle of the Great Depression with grades good enough to get him into the top universities in the country, but the money only for night school at City College of New York.*

*He got a day job making radio sets in a shop for \$9 a week, and at night he took college classes, studying to be an engineer like his father.*

*By 1940, he was working as a civilian employee for the Army Signal Corps joining similar brilliant young minds looking for ways to coordinate swift, accurate communications for our air, ground and naval units.*

*Steve became a US Army Officer in 1942 and served in the North Africa invasion, the invasion of Sicily and combat missions as a radar expert with the 15th Air Force in Italy.*

*When Pearl Harbor came along, Steve became a radioman on a B-17 bomber that was shot down over Croatia in 1944 — receiving the first of four serious shrapnel injuries he would sustain in combat missions over the next three years.*

*He landed in a tree and was discovered by the local underground who hid him for 4 days before returning him to his troops.*

*With Steve's good spirit, after the crash he would joke that "John Wayne bails out and lands in the arms of a beautiful woman, I bail out and land in a tree, bleeding."*

*After the war, Steve went to work in the private defense industry and was instrumental in helping develop the lunar experiments astronaut Neil Armstrong would carry out after he took mankind's first steps on the moon and planted the American flag.*

*He was also a key member of an elite team of engineers at Northrop Grumman and later Lockheed that developed guidance-missile systems used in nuclear submarines and sonar-detection equipment for U.S. aircraft.*

*After he retired from aerospace at 65, he became a math teacher and claimed that his two years teaching kids who struggled in math were the most rewarding, best years of his life.*

*Steve retired as a teacher at 67, promising to spend more time with his wife and two children.*

*But he just didn't like the way the best and brightest math students were being overlooked in our school system, so Steve went back to work at age 87.*

*He walked into his granddaughter's old elementary school in West Hills and volunteered to tutor Algebra and*

*prepare students for middle school.*

*Ten years later, at 97 years old, Steve finally retired.*

*Steve Politis is survived by his son, Nick Politis; daughter, Libby Hanson; and granddaughters, Rita and Julia Hanson.*

***His nobility and friendship will be missed by us all.***

**Councilmember Bob Blumenfield seconded the motion.**

## **CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE**

On Monday, March 5<sup>th</sup> State Senator Henry Stern will make the adjourning motion in honor of Steve Politis.

### **Prayers**

Unfortunately, several of our most active members were hospitalized or are either in Nursing Homes or at home recuperating from their injuries or illnesses. Our prayers are for a speedy recovery and a return to our meetings:

**Ellie Harrison  
Richard Myers  
David Plumb**

**Mort Green  
Ira Mandel**

### **WOW's monthly food drive is Monday, March 5th.**



### **Wings News Staff**

**Publisher:** Ed Reynolds

**Editor:** Judy Reynolds

**Reporters:** Ed Moreno, Peggy Jean Bassett

**Photographers:** Harlis Brend, Ed Reynolds  
Mike LaVere & Howard Swerdlick

**New Members:** Marion Lovelace & Shirley Andrews

**Reminders:** Connie Hein

**Speakers:** Barney Leone

**Tours:** Warren Weinstein

**Treasurer:** Barry Chapman

**Store:** Bob Bermant



## March Birthdays

Monte Merken	March 01, 1948
Ted Davis	March 02, 1939
Charles Othold	March 02, 1945
Steve Danz	March 03, 1945
Tom Villanueva	March 07, 1924
Mike Boyd	March 08, 1954
John Boiko	March 12, 1946
Dean Abrams	March 13, 1925
Mike LaVere	March 14, 1925
Tony Velarde	March 16, 1946
Ginger Lyon	March 20, 1927
Bob Stiles	March 22, 1937
Ed Moreno	March 23, 1928
Dan Holland	March 25, 1924
Mike Kata	March 27, 1921
Chip Stevens	March 28, 1958
Fred Kaplan	March 30, 1938
Ron Boggess	March 30, 1945

## New Members

We welcomed the following new members during the month of January 2018.

David Burns  
Charlie Fuller  
Oscar Stein  
Norman Anderson  
Steve Birgel  
Charles Hooker  
Jerry Knotts  
Mike Boyd  
Clyde Latimer  
Alvin Solomon  
Glenn Fiery



## Wings News Patrons

The following is a list of WOW members who have contributed \$10 to fund the publication of the *Wings News* for 12 months.

[illegible]

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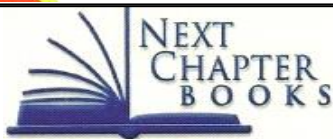
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