

# 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association Newsletter



27th



71st



94th

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## Heritage Room at Langley

*Randy Dodge, Enlisted Advisor*

Recently, Racquet and I have been contacted by Senior Airman Jordan Jacobs of the 27<sup>th</sup> AMU at Langley. SrA Jacobs is an active member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association, as well as currently serving as Assistant Crew Chief on the F-22 Raptor "Maloney's Pony". SrA Jacobs has been tasked with upgrading and adding exhibits to the Heritage room which will display artifacts, photos, etc. from the history of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing going all the way back to WWI.

In his own words, "Our 'Heritage Room' was established to preserve the great history and memories created by our unit throughout our history together. What I am hoping to accomplish is to find new information about all of the exhibits in our Heritage Room, and see if the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association has any pieces they would like to contribute, or see presented in our heritage Room. We would be glad to display any great artifacts, or history collected through the years pertaining to the 27<sup>th</sup>, 94<sup>th</sup> or 71<sup>st</sup>".

I can tell you from my correspondence with him, that SrA Jacobs is a highly motivated

airman, and is completely dedicated to the success of this task. Besides artifacts he is also asking for frames suitable for documents and photos. One of his ideas for fund raising is to sell current 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing "challenge" coins, and use the profits to help with the upgrade. He has also made a presentation to the 9<sup>th</sup> AF Command Chief, as well as other leadership, and tells me everyone is on board with this initiative. Again, in his own words, "We have been developing the idea of having a 'Grand Re-opening' of the Heritage Room, and inviting the Association to come to the 27<sup>th</sup> for the presentation. It would be a great honor to meet with everyone again".

Because SrA Jacobs is in the 27<sup>th</sup>, he is concentrating his efforts on collecting artifacts from the 27<sup>th</sup> per his assignment, but he is accepting artifacts from the 71<sup>st</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> for display as well. *(Continued on back page – 8)*

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1...Heritage Room at Langley
- 2...Racquet's Remarks
- 3...In Remembrance
- 4...27<sup>th</sup> Mission Ready Pilots Recognized
- 4... Foggia and Our Friend in Italy
- 6... Elmendorf P38 Lightning

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## Racquet's Corner

I am glad to report the Association has been active since the last Newsletter was published. Before I go any further I want to make sure we continue to recognize all the work that Bill "Gopher" Roegel contributes to ensure a quality and on time Newsletter is published for all our members to enjoy. Thanx Bill for continuing to do a great job!

Over the last month or so we have had a lot of dialogue among the Squadrons' leadership about ensuring that the organization is on the right track to best serve our members, maintain a strong and viable Association and do what is necessary to ensure the future of the Organization. After numerous emails back and forth among the Board and Squadron Presidents it was decided by all that it would be best to have a face-to-face meeting with everyone and discuss all the issues. To that end, the Board is planning to host a mid-Winter 2013 meeting at Langley on Jan 29-30, 2013. If the group decides to make any changes to the makeup or organization of the Association we will have time to prepare changes to the by-laws or charter so we can present the initiative for vote at the next general member business meeting during the 2013 Reunion. Speaking of the Reunion, the Board is aiming for the next Reunion to be held near Langley AFB in late Sept or early Oct 2013. We plan on using the January Board Meeting to discuss potential Reunion agenda items, etc. So put a marker on the calendar for those dates and we will be back to you shortly with a firm date and hotel location.

Here are a few updates that are occurring or have occurred with the Wing and/or Squadrons:

[1] The 27<sup>th</sup> AMU is starting a Heritage Room located in the AMU itself. The current "Maloney's Pony" assist Crew Chief, Sr Airman Jacobs, is OPR for the room. I have put him in contact with Randy Dodge, the Association Enlisted Advisor, to add our support for the project. Randy's article starts on page 1 of the Newsletter.

[2] 27<sup>th</sup> OPS held a War Story afternoon, hosted by Jim Beam & Jack Daniels. I was the invited guest to relate Vietnam era war stories to the

young troops. A couple of interesting facts: many in the audience were not even born when I flew those missions; there is a huge technology chasm between the equipment we flew and what is in use today, so big that it was difficult to explain how we accomplished the mission with such antiquated equipment.

[3] The 1<sup>st</sup> Wing has a new CV, Col Scott L. Giert. I took some time out of one of my base visits to meet with Scott. He is a USAFA graduate with combat experience in the F-16 during Northern and Southern Watch, Deliberate Watch, and Operation Deny Flight. I dropped off a membership application and hopefully Pete will hear from him soon.

[4] I had an opportunity to talk with the Wing/CC about the potential of identifying an Association Heritage Room somewhere within the Wing campus on base. Many of you are probably not aware that with the reorganization of Langley AFB into Joint-Base Ft Eustis/ Langley the base is now run by the 633rd Air Base Wing and Col Robbins is now only in charge of the OPS and MX of the Wing—smaller responsibility with a smaller physical plant. So the bottom line is there are a smaller number of locations to select from. We are working on it, but a long way to go.

[5] Lastly, this is quite a human interest story! About 2 months ago I received a request from an Italian historian who lives in the town of Foggia, Italy. He found my name via the Internet and he was trying to correct some historical records on a bombing raid on the town of Foggia. Evidently, the raid was quite devastating, some records indicate that the 1<sup>st</sup> Wing was involved but the Historian claimed that was not correct. With the help of Jim Graham, in the coordination of Bob Correia, we were able to clear the record and the 1<sup>st</sup> Wing reputation before next year's dedication, in Foggia, of a Memorial to all the town civilians who were lost in the raid. See Bob Correia's article on how this all came about.

Check 6

*Racquet*

## Notes from the Secretary

The start of a new year will once again will bring our annual membership campaign. All our non-life members should receive a mailing from me. As always, please take the opportunity to donate to the Endowment Fund. The website will be updated over the next few months, so continue to check it out. Also, if you have photos or news you feel worthy to post on the website send them to me at [1stfighter@comcast.net](mailto:1stfighter@comcast.net).

All the best this holiday season,

*Pete*

## In Remembrance

### Armand Charron, 94<sup>th</sup> Squadron



Dear Mr. Marty,

I am the son of Armand Charron. I need to inform you of his passing on August 29, 2012. He dearly loved your organization, attended numerous gatherings, and was looking forward to the next one.

Unfortunately, his 89 years caught up with him. He passed quietly in his sleep, I am sure dreaming of the next reunion. We all miss his smiling face every day.

Charron, Armand (89) June 05, 1923 - August 29, 2012. Armand was a Corporal in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII and served in an armaments group. He spoke numerous times about his unit in the Foggia Valley of Italy. (*Bob Charron, son*)

### Paul Petuch, 27<sup>th</sup> Squadron

Paul V. Petuch, 92, died Wednesday September 12, 2012. He was a long- time resident of North Wales with his beloved wife of 55 years Olga (Popoff) Petuch; loving father of three sons, Gregory (Catherine), Paul (Elizabeth) and Vincent; and the proud grandfather of six. Paul proudly served his country during WWII,

belonging to the 27<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the U.S. Army. With his unit he saw action from Europe through Italy into the Middle East.

He was a graduate of Temple University. Though not needed for his career, it was a goal that he had set and accomplished for himself.

Published in *The Reporter* on September 14, 2012 (From Olga through Bill McCole)

### **Trozy R. Barker**

(Last newsletter was returned with no forwarding address)

## **27<sup>th</sup> FS Mission Ready Pilots Recognized**

*Racquet, President*



As many of you who attended last summer's 27<sup>th</sup> Reunion in Nashville may remember, Moose Moore ordered some commemorative hats for those attendees who wanted to have a remembrance of

the event. Unfortunately, the hats did not come out as well as Moose had wanted, so he decided to cancel the order. When I arrived at the Reunion, Moose had about 60 hats that he had ordered and paid a discount price for but had no use. Pete Marty, Bob Correia and I took a look at the hats and felt they could see a fulfilling life with the Squadron. The Association paid Moose for the hats and we took them back to Langley for potential use in the Squadron.

While the reunion was going on, the Squadron was deployed to the Far East on a very successful deployment. When I returned from Nashville I dropped "Caveman" an email and told him about our "hat investment" and to start thinking about how best to use in the squadron. Since we had a limited number of hats and not enough to award to each returning member of the Squadron and AMU a hat, it was



decided to limit distribution to the OPS side only. We also decided that the hats were a perfect recognition award, the squadron had sufficient numbers to last for a while so it

was decided that the hats would be used to recognize Pilots upon reaching "MR" [Mission Ready] status.

On this day, 11/16/12, the very day I am writing this article, the first of the hats will be presented to the current MR members of the 27<sup>th</sup> squadron. Thus a new tradition for the 27<sup>th</sup> Eagles will commence and I am proud to say the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association is a key contributor.

## **Foggia and Our Friend in Italy**

*Bob Correia, Vice President*

Earlier this year our President received a communication from a man in Italy who appeared to be warning us of a story on the Web concerning the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group during WW II. Although it was in English, it was difficult to understand exactly what he was trying to say. I read the communication and thought that it wasn't important enough to spend a lot of time on; after all, it was far away in Italy. But our friend didn't go away.

He was able to find Jim Hardenbrook's email address and again explained his problem. In great detail he described both his background and his hobby. He also described the WW II bombing of the Italian city of Foggia by American bombers and how he had written 5 books on the bombing of Italian cities. He was certainly not your average person and his persistence was beginning to make me wonder what he was really trying to tell us. He gave us the Web site address and I was able to locate the site (which was in Italian) and with the help of Google I was able to translate the article into

broken English. The article was about the bombing and suffering the residents of Foggia had endured during WW II.

During WW II and the battle for Italy, Foggia was a strategic target due to its location as a highway and rail hub. It was also an ideal location for the German and Italian Air Forces. Prior to World War II the Italians had built at least 15 airfields in the area. The article went on to relate the dates of the bombings by the US Army Air Corps and the large number of Italian residents of Foggia who had lost their lives. Foggia had suffered the largest number of civilian casualties from the bombings than any other Italian city.

Now things were beginning to make sense. In 2013 (70 years after the bombings took place), the people of Foggia were planning to erect a monument to those who had lost their lives in the bombings and the Web site was telling the wartime story. Unfortunately, one of the dates, 22 July 1943, had the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group escorting bombers to Foggia and strafing the city. With a new understanding of what our friend was trying to tell us I emailed Jim Graham, one of our WW II fighter pilots (and Past President of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association) who I knew would have the answer. A few years back Jim had done a lot of research at the National Archives in Washington, DC and had a complete set of WW II Mission Reports for the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group. Jim emailed me a copy of the report for 22 July 1943. It just happened that on the 22nd of July 1943 the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group was not escorting bombers to Foggia, as stated in the article, but escorting bombers to Salerno.

I emailed a copy of the Mission Report to our friend in Italy, who quickly emailed us back. His response—it was the responsibility of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association to correct the Web article. It was back to the drawing board. Now we had to find the author of the Web page and get it corrected. My search located 2 sites with the same story, the original in Italian and a second in English. I was able to locate an email address for the author of the original article and sent him a copy of the Mission Report. Shortly thereafter reference to the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group

escorting Bombers to Foggia was deleted from both articles. Mission finally complete.

But who is this old man from halfway around the world who would take the time and effort to set the story straight? Someone who could immediately recognized that the reference to the 1<sup>st</sup> FG was an error and needed to be corrected. Let me introduce you to Mr. Gastone Mazzanti, born 1928, professor, author and friend of the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group. Now at the age of 84 he pursues his hobby of writing about the air campaigns over Italy during World War II.

Hopefully, we will someday meet Mr. Mazzanti and give him the thanks he rightfully deserves. Thank You Mr. Mazzanti “Friend of the 1<sup>st</sup>.”

[Ed note: Mr. Mazzanti has expressed interest in attending our next reunion with his wife.]

#### *An email from Mr. Mazzanti:*

Dear Mr. Correia,

Thanks very much for the message that you have sent me. This is a prompt reply to your requests, but first of all I am obliged to underline the fact that my English will be poor indeed. Excuse me: I do hope that you will understand what I will write.

I am an old man as I was born in 1928, a long time ago, but even if elderly I am clear of mind remembering very well my life, especially the time spent during the WW II. At that time, I was living in Fano, a little town placed along the coast of the Adriatic Sea (around 250 km. south of Venice). The war was not a joke, many times we remained under the bombs, not sleeping during the nights as we were obliged to go and remain in the shelters.

When the Allied troops arrived in the town, various units of the Allied air forces took possession of the local airport. I was lucky, because some times, the airmen took me in a Dodge and I arrived in the base, very close to the Spitfires, Thunderbolts and Mitchells. The base was used by the RAF, RAAF, RCAF and the USAAF especially with P 47 and B 25 aircrafts. I have the little flags of the 79th Fighter Squadron and of the 310th Bomb Group.

So, since then, I had the aviation in my inside. Then, when I finished to work in a bank and became a retired man, I decided to write something about the events of the world conflict. But this was possible only by going abroad (always with my wife that gave me a precious help) to visit some Archives. So we went to London (Public Record Office) and Royal Air Force Museum), USA (College Park and Maxwell AFB) and got a lot of documents.

Following that way and working very much to get sponsors, I was able to publish five books below mentioned:

**FANO:** " Dalle vie del cielo a quelle della città " (From the streets of the sky to those of the town");

**PESARO:** " La guerra è una gran brutta bestia" ("The war is a bad business");

**BOLOGNA:** " Obiettivo Bologna " ("Target Bologna") . (Bologna is the town where I got the degree in the University in Economy and Commerce);

**NAPOLI:** "Obiettivo Napoli" (" Target Napoli");

**ROMA:** "Roma Violata" ("Rome Violated").

The last one was a real success.

And now, as you know, I will present next December 14th my last book, the title is "**Foggia Under Attack**". Certainly this will cause the reaction of many, many citizens that consider the Americans responsible for the machine gunned action dated July 22, 1943. I will defend you, be sure.

I gave many lectures in the above mentioned sites with large presence of people and authorities, but my great happiness is when I visit the schools, I present to the students even many photos of the bombing, etc.....all with a background of music and they look and listen what I say with great attention.

I think that these few news are sufficient for your need, but if you want to know more, ok I am at your disposal.

May I ask you a favor? Well, I would like to get a copy of your newsletter, always if I can thank you in advance.

Give me bad marks for the job done: I express my regret.

I wish you all the best and I beg you to give my regards to the President Mr. Hardenbrook.

*Gastone Mazzanti*

## **Elmendorf P38 Lightning**

October 04, 2012

[AF.mil](mailto:AF.mil)

by Air Force Staff Sgt. Robert Barnett  
JBER Public Affairs

10/3/2012 - JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska (AFNS) – Flying through a January sky in 1945, U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Robert Nesmith was piloting a P-38G Lightning – one of the Air Force's best aircraft during World War II. The plane, equipped with two engines and relatively long wings, was a beautiful sight, and Nesmith worked hard to be in a position to fly it across the Pacific.

The U.S. Army Air Forces accepted the P-38G from the manufacturer, paying \$98,441.00 for it. The plane arrived at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, and was assigned to the 54th Fighter Squadron.

"It was one of the most significant aircraft in World War II," said Joe Orr, the 673rd Air Base Wing senior historian. "The Germans hated it; the Luftwaffe called it the 'fork-tailed devil,' and the Japanese called it 'two planes, one pilot.' It was small enough to be very agile. It had two engines, so it had the power to go really fast, and once they put turbochargers on the engines, they could go higher and faster than most enemy aircraft."

That isn't the only advantage possessed by the P-38.

"They had long range as well because the wingspan was big enough to put drop tanks with more fuel on there and get some distance," Orr explained. "They were used all over the Pacific, from island to island, because of their reach. That made the P-38 desirable for Air Force operations, and especially here in the Aleutians where a 1,200 mile mission was the norm.

After the Japanese left Attu Island and U.S. forces recovered the islands, the land was used to fly missions into northern Japan. Nesmith was returning from a training mission, crossing over Attu Island, when something went wrong. The aircraft's left propeller fluctuated while flying low in Temnac Valley.

"I was getting—not serious—but a little fluctuation," Nesmith said. "I had really pushed things down and it was real low."

Both propellers contacted the ground.

The plane bounced back up approximately 100 feet before Nesmith managed a successful wheels-up landing on the snow-covered valley.

Unharmful, the pilot surveyed the damage. It was well beyond repair.

"It was not in an accessible area," Orr said. "In order to get to it, you had to hike to it. They didn't have heavy-lift helicopters that could pick it up and bring it back.

"Maintenance crews just stripped it of what wasn't damaged and left the rest there," he said. "They essentially just abandoned it in place; it sat there for more than 50 years."

The plane crashed in the Aleutian Islands which are property of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, so the Air Force had to work with the agency to recover the plane.

Orr said the process of getting permission to have the last P-38G Lightning on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson was almost as difficult as restoring the one-of-a-kind aircraft's outside appearance.

Capt. Steve Morrisette, a 54th Fighter Squadron pilot in 1998, contacted Don Delk and Ed Lamm, 3<sup>rd</sup> Wing civilian employees with a combined experience of 70 years, to head the team that actually went to the island and brought the plane back.

Lamm – considered the expert on structural repair – was responsible for restoring all the base static displays. Delk had the expertise of management and recovery of aircraft, and resources as the maintenance squadron officer. He had previously been part of recovery

projects for crashed F-15 Eagles and the E-3 Sentry that crashed on Elmendorf in September 1995.

"(The P-38) was in sad shape," Delk said. "Even though it had been beaten up pretty severely by the salvage crew and chopped up with crash axes to remove components and such, it had a good bit of corrosion, but not as much corrosion as we would expect being this close to the ocean. So for the number of years it laid out there, we thought it was in pretty fair shape."

They worked in "The P-38 Shop" in Hangar Four in 1998. McCloud died that year, leaving many concerned that the project would die with him. Brig. Gen. Scott Gration, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wing commander at the time, picked up the direction and supported the work.

"I estimate between the trip to Attu and the whole works, the recovery and restoration, we probably spent on the order of a couple hundred thousand dollars," the restoration expert explained. "That is cheap, dirt cheap for this type of restoration; downtown probably would have taken me at least \$500,000 and two or three years."

In March of 2000, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wing awarded a \$223,256.70 contract to build the McCloud Memorial site where the P-38 was to be mounted. In July, the plane was put in its current and final resting place.

"A P-38 was the first airplane in Alaska to score an aerial victory over a Japanese plane in World War II," Orr said proudly.

After the war, thousands of aircraft were melted down and recycled. Because it had been left on the island, the plane that Nesmith flew avoided that fate.

The world's last example of a P-38G Lightning, though incapable of ever flying again, rests by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wing headquarters building as a reminder of the power it and other P-38Gs were able to wield during World War II.

*(Contributed by Bubba Parker)*

*“Heritage Room” continued from page 1*



The 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association supports this effort completely, and we will work with SrA Jacobs, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing leadership to see the Heritage Room continue to grow and expand on a continuing basis. Currently he is looking for artifacts, photos, and stories from all eras, but

he has let me know that he is lacking greatly in artifacts from the ADC/Cold War era.

If you have anything you would like to contribute, please let me know and I will make sure you can get it to SrA Jacobs. This is a great step forward in continuing our close relationship with the active duty 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing, and we look forward to contributing greatly to this initiative.

*“If it turns, burns, banks, and rolls, maintainers made it happen”!!!.*

Website: <http://www.1stFighter.com>



It's not that all airplane pilots are good-looking...  
It's just that good-looking people seem more capable of flying airplanes.

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