

Oregon Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society
History News for February 2014



History News → Readers, where's your story?

Oregon 8th AFHS Chapter News and how to share YOUR history with others through our 8th AFHS Chapter is on the last page.

New Zenith Press Book from Robert F. Dorr in October

[*Fighting Hitler's Jets*](#) [Editor's Note: My copy arrived in November and will be reading it over the next month or so. Review to follow. Walter Groce, who died last year and was a member of our Oregon 8th AFHS, was the first pilot to get a good video of a 262 – he shot it down in an inverted head-on pass.

[Correction] He was climbing up when he made the shot – then went inverted to watch the jet move away and then then he spiraled down and shot more at the jet to get better film footage after the pilot had bailed out! [I had him inverted when firing initially, he stated he ended up inverted.]

[Fighting Hitler's Jets: The Extraordinary Story of the American Airmen Who Beat the Luftwaffe and Defeated Nazi Germany](#) [Amazon Link]

[My Review]

FHJ covers WW II aerial combat which occurred mainly between the American fighter pilots who encountered the Me-163, Me-262 and Ar-234 jets in 1944 and 1945. Told from the view of the combat pilot's encounters via combat reports, and interviews with surviving pilots of both sides, it reveals both the technical and operational issues that confronted those trying to shoot down the jets and those flying the jets.

It covers the rare aircraft that the Third Reich researched, tested, and in some cases the prototypes which were built but never put into full production of both prop and jet aircraft. It also covers the jet aircraft the both the British and Americans were developing concurrently with the Germans and how captured aircraft and data influenced the design of postwar jets of all countries.

The book delves into the detailed records of the encounters against the jets by describing the aerial combat by combining both views of the engagement into one flowing narrative. From my perspective this works well since three people that I personally know encountered the jets: two fighter pilots: Capt. Walter Gross & Capt Clayton Kelly Gross, as well as a B-17 pilot Larry J Bellarts whose tail gunner shot down a Me-262 late in the war. I have the gun camera film of Lt Walter's Gross's encounter. So the narrative is accurate when compared against the three with whom I have talked with about their jet combat encounters.

Some of the operational issues, tactics employed, and technical issues discussed in the book were new to me. This means that those who are new to the whole prop versus jet combat as well as those who already know something about it will learn something new after reading the book.

A complete list of all jet aircraft lost in combat is included along with their wrk number.

Robert F. Dorr, the author of "Mission to Berlin," a history of Eighth Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress crews, wanted "Milk Run" readers to know that they can get signed, first-edition copies of his book — which one reviewer called "'Band of Brothers' with Planes" — at a 45% discount plus postage. The book has a retail price of \$28 not counting packaging and shipping; get it from Bob for \$19, including packaging and shipping. Bob makes his books available on a not-for-profit basis and donates proceeds to charity. If you want one or more signed copies of this character-driven narrative history, contact Bob at (703) 264-8950 or robert.f.dorr@cox.net. Bob told us that he wishes people would pick up the phone more often, so don't hesitate to call him.

Commentary on the Outbreak of Media Events about WW I

This year is the 100th anniversary of the start of "The Great War" aka: WW I.

Simon Jenkins from The Guardian:

"I must apologise to the Germans. They are about to suffer an avalanche of often sickening Great War memorabilia, largely at their expense. It will be the British at their worst: sanctimonious, self-congratulatory, worshipping at the tomb of the unknown, awful German. The centenary of the first world war is already flooding the television schedules before the date of its outbreak (in autumn 1914)."

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/30/first-world-war-worship-sickening-avalanche>

Purple Heart Re-United with Descendants of Awardee

Wounded on July 1 in 1918 while in the 2nd Infantry Division in France, Pvt. 1st Class Frank E. Conroy was awarded the Purple Heart. Medals were routinely customized by the US Government with the names of who it belonged to during WW I (unlike WW II). After 96 years *Purple Hearts Reunited* discovered it and traced down the descendants and gave it back to them.

<https://bangordailynews.com/2014/02/02/living/long-lost-purple-heart-medal-finds-its-way-back-home-to-maine/>

How Many Soldiers Really Died During WWI?

When counting the human cost of WW I there are many variables: Number of soldiers actually tracked, civilians before and after the war, migration of people, direct and indirect effects that caused the death of them. Most estimates state that 9 million SOLDIERS died during the war. But how those statistics were gathered, who counted them, and official omissions has led French historian Antoine Prost to say that actually 10 million soldiers died during the war.

Some countries were well organized in tending to the graves of those killed in action during WW I, some were haphazard, some did nothing.

http://www.france24.com/en/20140122-world-war-one-death-count-too-low-one-million-antoine-prost/#./?&_suid=1391472483052014222403953640217

Keeping paper Records – Proved He was Entitled to His Awards

After getting out of the 8th AF at the end of WW II George Hatcher took his DD-214, a single sheet of paper showing time served and award earned while in the military, and he it filed in the country courthouse.

When he finally asked to be given the metals, some 70 years later, the Army said he was not entitled to some – but his DD 214 said he was. So having a paper record allowed him to get the awards - with some help from his congressional delegation.

<http://www.johnsoncitypress.com/article/114144/erwin-nine-member-receives-awards-after-70-years>

Victory at Stalingrad – 71st Anniversary

February is the month in which the Battle of Stalingrad ended. It started in August of 1942 (start dates vary depending on what source you read) and ended on February 2, 1943 when the last group of Germans surrounded in the Red October Factory area surrendered.

<http://www.tvr.by/eng/news.asp?id=16519&cid=16>

Russian Veterans Dying off Fast Too

The Soviet Union, and the successor states after it broke up, always kept exact track of everyone so the ability to know exactly who is where and what role they played during WW II is precise.

In Belarus, where a lot of fighting took place in the early part and the later part of the war (including the destruction of Army Group Center in 1944) there are exactly 22,086 veterans of the Great Patriotic War as of January 1, 2014, still living within the country.

<http://news.belta.by/en/news/society?id=739098>

Marshal Vasily Ivanovich Petrov dead at 98

Starting the war as a Lieutenant, he fought throughout the war (a rare feat for such a junior officer on the front lines) and became a Marshall in the 1980s.

http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2014_02_02/Soviet-era-Marshall-Vasily-Petrov-dies-at-98-0532/

German TV / Movie Generation War

Now released worldwide after a German only showing in 2013, it depicts five friends who go off to war on the Eastern front in 1941 and of whom only three returned.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/05/opinion/the-unquiet-ghosts-of-nazi-germany.html?_r=0

'The Monuments Men'

As part of Allied planning and operation works of art, both small and large, were always thought about during combat operations. The 8th and 15th Air Forces always planned bombing missions to avoid very historical sections of Allied nations (and sometimes non-allies). This new movie depicts the on the ground effort put forth to ensure that works of art were not destroyed whenever possible.

Some towns, like La Rochelle on the Bay of Biscay on the French coast, were never bombed even though a U-Boat base was there – due to the very historical town itself. After invasion of France the allies just surrounded it and it only surrendered at the end of the war.

<http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/stories/historian-sheds-light-on-the-monuments-men>

Soviet Era War Posters

The University of Nottingham has a very large collection of USSR war posters – all scanned in high resolution for web viewing also.

<http://boingboing.net/2014/02/02/massive-collection-of-soviet-w.html>

ANZIO – The “End Run” that Wasn’t

The resort town of Anzio was the site of an amphibious assault designed to bypass the German defense line holding up the Allies and collapse the whole German defense of central Italy – but due to lots of factors it turned into a 4 month long battle where the lines hardly moved at all. A series of Life Magazine photos.

<http://life.time.com/history/anzio-unpublished-photos-italian-campaign-world-war-ii/#1>

Making history: The Great War Educational War Game

Coming out on July 28, 2014, on the 100th Anniversary of the Start of WW I, this is a multiplayer game that puts players in the role of each nation.

<http://venturebeat.com/2014/02/04/muzzy-lane-launches-educational-strategy-game-on-world-war-i/>

Fascism & the Pope Pius XI

A new book explores the relationship that the Catholic pope had with Fascism before & during WW II.

<http://www.npr.org/2014/01/27/265794658/pope-and-mussolini-tells-the-secret-history-of-fascism-and-the-church>

Auctioning Once Looted Art

Finding out who really owns European pre-WW II art is very difficult, but auction houses, who profit enormously when selling these artworks, have become specialists in researching the provenance of all sorts of artworks in order to sell them now.

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303973704579355161451467386>

On Feb 3, 1945 Lt “Rosie” Rosenthal lead a 1000 plane raid to Berlin

LT. Rosenthal was lucky to lead this raid. On a prior mission he was the only plane to come back to Thorpe Abbots out of the 15 sent out with the 100th BG (Heavy).

PTSD Treatment in the 1940s – Lobotomy

After piloting 34 combat missions in a B-17s over Europe in the 728th Squadron of the 452nd Bombardment Group (H), Roman Tritz had what is now called PTSD – but back then there were no drugs or detailed psychological programs to treat the post combat stress the mind was working on. So the VA did Lobotomies on Veterans – over 2,000 of them in the 1940s and early 1950s.

<http://www.kvoa.com/news/wis-wwii-vet-was-lobotomized-by-govt-after-war/>

Telling of Father’s Multiple Escapes Gets Her United with Father’s Wingman

Katky Knick’s father, Lt Karl Kurbjun, flew in the 486th BG (H) out of Sudbury England, and was shot down over Leipzig in 1944. In a photo that shows her father’s plane another plane, that of Lt Alfred Sanders, who was able to return to base with his plane damaged. He called her up after hearing her relate her father’s story.

<http://chronicle.augusta.com/news/metro/2014-02-02/chronicle-wwii-escape-story-unites-military-families?v=1391389672>

A Sightseeing Ride Turned Deadly

On May 10, 1945, a group formation to fly at low level over Germany to see the damage caused by the 8th Air Force turned deadly when two B-17s collided over Bocking in northern Essex – one of which was just forming up to do the tour then head back to the US.

<http://www.lakewyliepilot.com/2014/02/03/2279521/town-in-england-memorializing.html>

Flying Intelligence and Bombing Missions 5 Miles Up

Howard Jackson flew combat missions – but some were designed to gather intelligence and not just drop bombs on factory and military targets.

“Understand that we would fly over a country that we never were in, over a city which we couldn’t pronounce the name, and we had an 8-by-10 photograph of an intersection to bomb a bridge or something, and you’re 5 miles up in the air, 30 degrees below zero, under oxygen, everyone yelling at you, you’re being shot at, and you’ve got to find this individual target. We never, ever bombed indiscriminately.”

<http://shelterislandreporter.timesreview.com/2014/01/17/island-profile-howard-jackson%E2%80%82and-a-war-he-cant-forget/>

Trained For Desert Warfare in WW II – Sent to Attu & The South Pacific

Clifford A. Hahn quit his job at a Bethlehem Steel Plant (he would have been exempt from the draft) and joined the Army in WW II. Ending up with the 7th Infantry Division at Ft Irwin in California and training with the division for desert warfare the 7th was assigned to take back the Aleutians and then onto the South Pacific – where the only sand seen would be on the beaches.

http://www.mcall.com/news/local/mc-war-story-clifford-hahn-20140125_0_4254154.story

Oregon Chapter News

Local Area News

Next General Membership Meeting for Oregon 8th AFHS is February 22, 2014

Previous PROGRAMs in 2013:

- Ben “Flaps” Berry – Tuskegee Airman
- ;Jack Kline and the Vanport Flood
- B-29 Navigator of “Going Jesse”
- Bob Schuberg and revisiting the airfields of the 8th

All programs are videotaped and transcribed and put into our archive. You can purchase each DVD of each presentation for \$10.00.

There is no cost to attend the meeting and it is open to the public.

Oregon Chapter Executive Board Meetings

All members can attend any Executive board meeting. The Board meets at the Elks Lodge three Saturdays before the regular membership meeting. If you can spare up to 2 hours between 10 AM and Noon you can also join the board and help make our chapter a continuing success.

Send Stories and documents to be Borrowed / Archived

If you have items that you wish to share with others, they can be loaned to the Oregon Chapter, scanned and catalogued and then returned to you. You can always donate them permanently to the chapter if you wish. Contact Tom Philo to make arrangements for the documents.

Items in the archive are usually be posted onto the web site (see release form on web site) so that everyone can learn from what others have experienced.

Oregon Chapter 8th AFHS

If you wish to be removed from the e-mail list please let us know.

Secretary 8th AFHS of Oregon
Tom Philo
17502 SW Kimmel Ct
Beaverton, Oregon 97007-6877
secretary@8thafhsoregon.com
<http://www.8thafhsoregon.com>

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