



1st Pursuit Group  
5 May 1918



27th



71st



94th

# 1st Fighter News

Volume 22 No. 4  
November 2004

Send articles to Bruce Gordon, 105 Broadbill Ct., Georgetown, KY 40324 502-867-1171  
Send Dues & changes of address to Diana Dale, 15 Corona St. Denver, CO 80218



## *Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, America's "Ace of Aces", 1918 and 1967*

*The Spad on the right is now in the Air Force Museum with an Indian Head instead of the Hat-in-the Ring*

Eddie Rickenbacker, America's "Ace of Aces" in WW I, came to Selfridge AFB in 1967 for the 50th anniversary of Selfridge AFB, to see a rebuilt Spad fly and to attend a formal "Dining In" dinner. Captain Eddie received full VIP treatment. He prided himself in keeping up with technology and most of his public comments were in support of hi-tech activities and space flight.

We 94th Squadron pilots wanted to hear about his WW I exploits. We convened a special breakfast in our Squadron dining room, just for Eddie and Squadron fighter pilots (although a few Colonels managed to crash the party). When the chance came, I noted that there were only fighter pilots present and asked him to tell us a war story from WW I.

Eddie asked: "How long would it take for you to take off, shoot down an enemy airplane, and land -- under ideal conditions?" I replied that it would take five minutes to scramble, at least ten minutes to locate and shoot down the enemy plane, and another ten minutes to get back and land. At least twenty-five minutes.

"Five minutes" he said firmly. We muttered in disbelief, so he told this story: The Squadron was in France and was given French Nieuport bi-wing fighters to fly, but they didn't have any guns. The Squadron set up on a field and began training flights, but could not fight without guns. The Germans knew they were there, and every morning an observation plane would fly down the runway taking pictures, make a right turn and fly back to the German lines.

One afternoon a truck arrived with guns for their Nieuports. The pilots and crews worked all afternoon and through the night installing the guns on their planes. Captain Eddie had just finished installing and test-firing his guns and was still sitting in the cockpit with the engine ticking over when the air raid siren blew. He looked up and saw the German observation plane coming. Captain Eddie opened his throttle and took off behind it as the observation plane flew over his head. As it started its right turn, Captain Eddie cut it off, pulled up and shot it down. He continued his turn around to the right and landed. He taxied in, and logged five minutes of flying time!

**Bruce Gordon**

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**IN MEMORIAM**

Jack Ilfrey

**President's Letter**

Dear Members of the 1st,

Thank you for electing me your new president. I look forward to meeting more of you and doing my best to serve the First Fighter Association during the next two years. We've just had a wonderful reunion in Seattle, many thanks to Jim Graham and his great crew. Everyone cooperated except the weatherman. Boeing's new Hall of Heroes WW II fighter plane exhibit with it's beautiful P-38 center piece warmed our hearts.

I may be the last WW II veteran to serve our organization as president, consequently I am very thankful for the younger generations who have the pride and interest in preserving our historic heritage. Many thanks to the post WW II members who have "stepped forward" and accepted the positions of vice-president (Bob Correia), scty/treas (Diana Dale), and newsletter editor (Bruce Gordon).

I believe our most important current challenge is to find and recruit those vets that served after WW II. I have appointed a membership committee to assist in this task; we will welcome any suggestions or ideas that would help.

Several members have asked for a reunion in Sept., 2005; I have appointed a committee to select some good sites in the west or mid-west and poll the membership. In Sept. 2006 we plan to return to the east coast—hopefully, to Langley AFB where there will be a big attraction, especially for our "Jet Age" members.

Remember to check our web site frequently and "spread the word" to potential members;

**"Be First Fighter Proud".**

Wishing you and yours a Joyous Holiday Season and all the best in 2005.

Sincerely yours,

*Al Eberhardt*

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**94th Squadron****Message from the new Squadron President**

Just a note to tell you that after the great time we had in Seattle, I am all fired up to get together with all of you again.

Please feel free to call me anytime. My home phone number is 937 879 3800 , cell phone is 937 321 7100. I am interested in any ideas that you might have for our next reunion and also any suggestions to boost our membership.

LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.



94th

Al Bruder, President  
652 Ramblewood Place  
Fairborn, Ohio 45324

**Minutes of 71<sup>st</sup> Squadron Meeting, 9/15/03,****Doubletree Inn, Seattle, Washington**

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Pete Bartos, from the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter wing and president of the 71<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron. He apologized for not having taken a more active role as president, but active duties were more pressing. He announced that the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association Web site has been very successful, receiving 30,000 hits and 3,000 visitors per week. He added that he would have to step down as president and Web master in December of this year, because he will be assigned to duty in Rome, Italy, and won't have access to a computer.

Diana Dale, secretary/treasurer, made her report. The 71<sup>st</sup> Squadron account had \$149.91 when she took the duties over in March 2003 and had \$152.07 as of August 31, 2004. Because the 71<sup>st</sup> collects no dues and decided not to do so, she asked for suggestions as to what to do with the balance. Robin Hansen moved that the amount be transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Group Association to help defray out-of-pocket expenses arising from the reunion. Carl Hagen seconded, and the motion carried with a unanimous vote.

Jim Graham asked for input as to the current nature of the 71<sup>st</sup> Association. Discussion followed, and most agreed that the 71<sup>st</sup> should conduct itself as part of the 1<sup>st</sup> FG, rather than continue as a separate entity, but that there should be a president of the 71<sup>st</sup> to act as point-person for 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association activities. P.E. MacAllister nominated Robin Hansen for the position, Pete Maimone seconded, and the vote carried unanimously.

Jim Graham suggested members use e-mail wherever possible in order to stay informed of the group's activities, and forms were distributed for collecting current information on all members attending. He added that he has completed the job of collecting mission records and MACRs on everyone in the 71<sup>st</sup> from the WWII years, so if anyone wants copies he can furnish them.

Pete Bartos added that the Web site hits keep expanding, and encouraged everyone to keep monitoring the site. He passed the gavel to the incoming president, Robin Hansen.

Robin Hansen moved for adjournment, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

Respectfully submitted,  
Diana Dale, Secretary/Treasurer  
71<sup>st</sup> Fighter Association



27th Fighter Squadron at Museum of Flight



Pete "Toes" Bartos and Brooks Hatch



71st Squadron at the Museum of Flight



P-38 Pilots at the Museum of Flight

### **1st Fighters Reunion - Seattle, September 2004**

The 1st Fighters stayed at the airport Doubletree Inn and enjoyed excursions to Victoria Island, a Locks Cruise, a dinner train around the lake (at night, in the rain). Main events were the Squadron Dinners, and the final dinner at the Museum of Flight.

Five of our leading WW II pilots met the press and answered questions from the audience in the main auditorium. The stories were great! The opportunity to hear those stories from the pilots themselves was priceless.

"America's Greatest Generation" - write your stories down so they may be heard by the younger generation, eager to hear what you did!



94th Squadron at Dinner

**SEATTLE 2004 REUNION DEBRIEF—by Jim Graham**

In the August newsletter I presented a dismal prospect for our 15th biennial reunion in Seattle. Registration returns were few and I was receiving almost as many notes sending regrets as I was firm registrations. As we moved into August, the pace picked up and prospects looked brighter. Here are some of the actuals that we achieved:

Total registrants — 154      Cancellations — 9      Attendees — 145

Unit representation — 1st Ftr. wing — 1 (Col. Tom Tinsley , Op. Support Group Commander. He is a real gem! — and the ‘ambassador for our future’ at Langley)

    27th Squadron — Members — 15 , Family & friends — 21

    71st Squadron— Members — 25 , Family & friends — 50

    94th Squadron— Members — 15 , Family & friends — 15

    Association friends — 3

Regional representation — East of the Mississippi — 44 ; Midwest — 46 : West Coast — 55

We were indeed privileged to have BGen Stephen Goldfein address us at the Saturday banquet! How about that wild shirt he wore under his mess blues?! Immediately after he left us, the General was embarking on a change of station. He assumed command of Nellis AFB and its USAF operational training functions as well as acquiring his 2nd star in the first week of October! Congratulations, MGen Goldfein!!

We want to thank the Museum of Flight for their cooperation and support of our festivities at the MOF. As ever, we owe a debt of gratitude to P. E. (Mac) MacAllister- (71st) for pitching in with his talents and monetary offerings. Mac sported us to the pre-dinner reception at the Saturday banquet and did his usual masterful job as moderator of the morning panel session in the theater. Our own Lt. Col. Pete Bartos - (71st) put on a great post-mission buzz job in the afternoon panel as he bids us farewell (temporary, we hope) for a new assignment in Europe for the USAF. Thanks, Pete for flying our wing as we limp into the future!

I thank all of you for your cooperation and expressions of good will throughout my presidency of the Association and look forward renewing good friendships I’ve made in my involvement with the 1st. You’re the best!



## Marvin “Windy” Wingrove’s Pearl Harbor Story

Marvin Wingrove was at Pearl Harbor when the Japs attacked on Dec. 7, 1941. He wrote this story for his family before he passed away August 10, 2001. His son, Pete sent us the story with his charge to you of America’s “Greatest Generation” to write down your stories. Marvin Wingrove later flew with the 27th Squadron and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

DECEMBER 7, 1941

I woke up that morning, got the Sunday paper, and was reading the funnies when I heard strange aircraft engines. Being an aviation nut, I went outside to see what they were. Three Japanese torpedo bombers came within about two hundred yards of where I was standing. Watched them dip down into Pearl and let their torpedoes go. I went back in and called our Finance Captain, and told him that we were being attacked by the Japanese. He said I was nuts, and to go back to bed. About that time, the bombing started hot and heavy. He came back and said to head for Headquarters where we had a .50 cal. antiaircraft gun on the top floor. Started running down the middle of the street oblivious of the fact I could get crumped by strafers. I was running along when a Jap plane started strafing two guys who were running ahead of me. He splattered them pretty good and that convinced me to take cover. Ran from palm tree to palm tree until I got to an open area about 75 yards short of the PX. It was all open so I looked around, and decided I could make it. Dashed toward the PX and was going good when a Jap headed my way. There was no door at that end of the PX, so I dived through a window. Inside I decided to go through the PX and out the other side to be on my way to Headquarters. Well, that’s about the time the Japs decided that the PX was base headquarters and started bombing. Their first bomb hit a wash shed out in back and blew it all to pieces. Decided I had better take cover. Over in the corner behind the serving counter was a big double coffee maker sitting on a block stand. Under it was a mop bucket with a squeeze handle attached. I jerked that out of there and crawled into a snug comer. A couple of other guys decided that was a good idea and piled in behind me. A bit crowded, but I was on the bottom. A bomb hit the entrance door to the PX and the wall behind me rocked so badly I was sure it would fall down. Came more bombing and the two guys on top of me were hit with shrapnel, and I could feel blood dripping on me. There was so much dust from the bomb hits, I could hardly breathe. Must have been in shock because the next thing I remember was the medics pulling us out. They took us to the Base Hospital where they

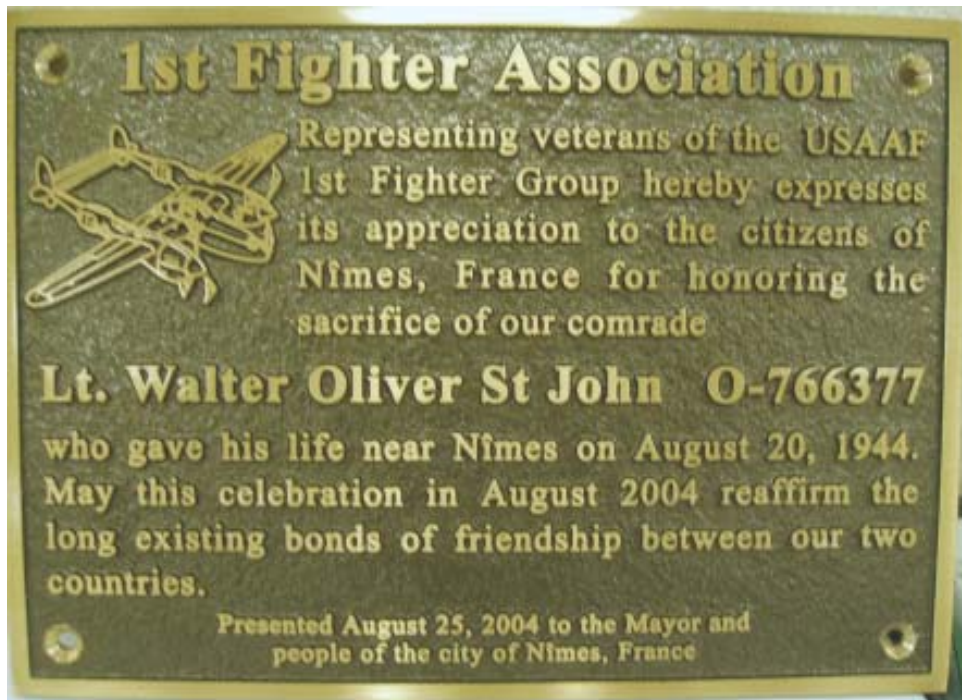


“Windy” earned the DFC later while flying with the 27th

examined me, and sat me next to the entrance door of the hospital. The next two hours I sat there watching them carry the burned and wounded into the hospital. Every now and then someone would look at me and decide that my wound was not so life threatening as to require more attention. Someone had gone to the Officer’s Club and was passing out pints of whiskey. I took one, and after three or four good healthy slugs, I began to feel better. I must have been in some sort of shock watching all the really serious wounded, etc. that it seemed like a dream. (I visited Hickam AFB a couple of years ago and went to the PX and the same spot at the Hospital. That visit brought it all back very vividly). After the whiskey, someone came in a 2 1/2 ton truck and took us to Tripler. I had a bomb fragment in my right leg, which they had bandaged right away. About ten o’clock that night, a Chinese

reserve Captain tried to get the fragment out of my leg. It was about as big around as a pencil and maybe an inch and a half long. It had gone almost all the way through my calf and stopped just short of the other side. He dug around in there for what seemed like forever. Those pincers might just as well have been a red hot poker. I had never experienced anywhere near that much pain in my life before. He finally gave up, and I was pretty happy about that. I’m not sure, but I think his last name was Chang. They had run out of morphine and everything else, but a couple of days later, they got some and slit my leg open to get the fragment out. (I carried it, with the dried blood and skin still intact, for some time when a girl named Mary Randall borrowed it to show to some friends. She lost it.). While I was in the hospital a girl named Betty Sherpa, daughter of a local contractor, came to visit me and stayed all afternoon. I was really the envy of the ward. Tried to find her afterwards, but they had returned to the mainland, and that was the end of that. She was a doll.





Jean Robin, our friend and correspondent from France, attended a ceremony in France to honor this 94th pilot.

The ceremony in honor of St John was very, very moving in the presence of his young brother, Terry.

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*The Prefect, The Military Attaché to the US Embassy in Paris, Commandant General in Nîmes, Nîmes City Hall, Friends of the Association "Souvenir Français",*

*We gathered to day to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Nîmes Liberation and to render our respect and consideration to this young American pilot of the First Group:*

***Second Lieutenant Walter Oliver St John,  
who gave his life for our freedom.***

*Our joy is nevertheless mixed with sadness and we thank his brother, Terry St John, to have come to Nîmes even though he still misses his brother Walter immensely . (I'm asking that you applaud Terry St John to show your appreciation for joining us.).*

*I must tell you also that Veterans of 1<sup>st</sup> fighter Group are distressed for they had appointed their group Historian, John Mullins, to represent them at this ceremony but John Mullins passed away suddenly on July 11<sup>th</sup>. John was my friend.*

*Lets get back 60 years ago, August 20<sup>th</sup> 1944, in the evening. The 94<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron returns to its base in Corsica after bombing without much success, roads and railways bridges of Remoulins. All of a sudden the "Lightnings" see below an important convoy going from Nîmes to Beaucaire. After a radio consultation, the pilots dive and destroy the armored convoy but flak protecting the convoy reacts violently and hits the P-38 of Lt. St John..*

*The young pilot tries to reach altitude so he could be ejected but his parachute turns into a torch. While his plane in fire crashes near "Moulin Gazay" in a field belonging to Mr. Mollimard, Lt. St John hits the ground violently and lays there unconscious. Right away Mr. Payan, Savagol, Raymond Smerani (present here !) and young Jean Massota who saw St John fall, tried to help him but a German soldier on a motorcycle dispersed them. A German truck appeared picked up the Lieutenant and disappeared the way he came in.*

*We never saw or heard from him again. American inquiries were left unanswered so the American Headquarters notified the Family as: Pilot missing in action.*

*In spite of all our efforts, Walter Oliver St John name is listed on the wall "Missing in action" in Draguignan American Cemetery.*

*This stele in memory of Lieutenant St John is erected by the French Remembrance.*



F-106 of the 94th at Mt McKinley, Alaska, 1965

**Do not be among the missing**

It is crucial to advise the Secretary of any change of address before it occurs. When you move and your forwarding address expires before the next mailing, the Association loses track of you. Update your address with:

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