



THE ATLANTA WORLD WAR II ROUND TABLE

PRESERVING HISTORY

INTERNET: <http://www.atlantawwiroundtable.org>

VOL. 31 No. 4

304th MEETING

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Contributor(s) To This
Newsletter

* John Wagnon

* Raymond (Ray) Fordyce

* Pete Mecca / Jay Lenny

* Brent Bracewell / Marc Feit

* Emily Carley / Martin Madert

Elected Officers 2016-2017

Commander – Pete Mecca

Tel: 770-354-9697

Deputy Commander – Jack Coyle

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Adjutant – John Kovach

Finance Officer - Jay Lenny

Sr. Sgt.-at-Arms – Ralph Lehr

Sr. Chaplain – Elaine Rivers

Appointments 2016-2017

Asst. to Commander - Hank Frampton

Aide-to-Commander(s) – Joe Jordan

Finance Assistant – Guy Condra

Asst. Sgt.-at-Arms – Bob Rivers

Asst. Sgt.-at-Arms – Mike Koesters

Asst. Chaplain & Sec. Joyce Mecca

Public Relations Director – Jill Berry

Media Librarian – Ginny Koesters

Website Monitor – Greg McClelland

Date: DECEMBER 15th, 2016 (THURSDAY) >>>> *Next Meeting Jan. 19th*

Time: Social Half-Hour: **11:00 AM – 11:30 AM** > **MEETING START TIME 11:30 AM** - Speaker Immediately Following Lunch

** **PETITE AUBERGE RESTAURANT**

2935 N. Druid Hills Road, **Web Site:** www.petiteauberge.com
Atlanta, Georgia 30329 (Restaurant Phone: 404-634-6268)

Price: \$ 20.00 Per Plate ** **NO RESERVATION REQUIRED** **

Speaker(s): John Wagnon

Subject: - “Snippets From My World War II Experiences”

Mission Statement

We, who by our own actions, and by our heritage, know that liberty has not, is not, nor ever will be free, do in association with our friends and comrades, who believe as we do, pledge that we will meet at the call of our Commander no less than ten times a year:

* **To hear of the war experiences of our members and invited guests**

* **To encourage and demonstrate pride in our country and its armed forces**

* **To pass on to posterity our knowledge of World War II, and of the price – Human and material - that was paid by our nation for the preservation of liberty in the United States and the world**

((Meeting Attendance For The November 17th, 2016 Meeting: ± 70))

Speaker for DECEMBER 15th, 2016 – John Wagnon (To Be Introduced By Commander Mecca)

The DECEMBER 15th, 2016 (THURSDAY) Meeting of the Atlanta WW II Round Table will feature John Wagnon as our speaker.

John is a native of Georgia, born in 1921, in Morgan County, near Madison. On his fourth birthday his family moved to Dublin, Georgia where he lived until he graduated from high school. He attended the two-year Middle Georgia College, in Cochran, and graduated from there in 1940. Shortly after, in September of 1940, He moved to Atlanta where he contacted the Georgia Evening College, now known as Georgia State University, concerning his education and employment. John entered the V-7 program of the US Navy, was employed by the Buckeye Cotton Oil Company, and attended Georgia Evening College, graduating in 1943.

In November of 1943, John was commissioned as an Ensign at Columbia University in New York City. While on temporary duty in San Francisco, he met his wife-to-be, Ruth Bonar of Denver, Colorado, who was serving as an active WAVE. He served aboard the USS Auriga (AK-98) from February 1944 until the ship was decommissioned in 1946. The USS Auriga was awarded four battle stars for action at Saipan, Leyte Gulf, Lingayan Gulf, and Okinawa. The Auriga spent approximately one month, from November to December, in Tokyo Bay of 1945.

Ruth and John married in January of 1946 in New York City. In early 1946, he served as Gunnery Officer of the USS Dane APA 238. He left the navy in May of 1946, and he and Ruth moved to Raleigh, North Carolina in June of 1946. He found work as a buyer for Buckeye Cotton Oil Company, Ralston Purina Company and Cargill, Inc. and remained in that industry for a total of 40 years.

Retiring in 1986 and having a passion for travel and meeting new people, he has enjoyed twelve trips to Europe, some of those with his grandchildren. John has three children, seven grandchildren, and five great grandchildren and confesses he would love to have more grandchildren. In May of 2000 he moved into the Glenaire Retirement Community in Cary, NC and plans to spend the rest of his years there.

Please welcome John Wagnon as our DECEMBER 15th, 2016 speaker (304th Meeting.)

Speaker Review for Nov. 17th, 2016 – - Raymond Fordyce (Introduced By Commander Mecca)

The November 17th, 2016 (Thursday) meeting of the Atlanta WW II Round Table featured as our speaker Raymond B. Fordyce, Jr., son of Capt. Raymond “RB” Fordyce of the 385th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. Commander Mecca observed that *Contrails of the 385th* was, “one of the best presentations we’ve had... ‘spot on’ with details and facts.”

Ray began his presentation with an exact-moment snapshot of the situation on November 17th, 1944, at the 385th BG. He described, in detail, Mission #212, a tactical attack on the supply depot and transportation hub of Eschweiler, Germany. The objective was to disrupt enemy reinforcement and re-supply efforts to their defensive positions some 12 miles to the west, in the face of advancing Allied armies. He omitted no detail, including WIA (Wounded in Action) figures, aircraft damage and target-strike results. This got the audience “into” the moment, the *exact* moment(“1703 hours Zulu”), of November 17th, 1944.

CONTINUED ON BACK

The presentation unfolded in five parts - *Mission, Methods, Men, Maelstrom, Memoriam* – and had scores of unique visuals, including images of Luftwaffe training documents, all of the theatre aircraft, combat photos and personal glimpses of the men of the 385th.

Mission: The mission of the 8th Air Force was to prosecute the war against Germany, strategically, tactically and through air superiority, and that of the 385th was to execute strategic with extreme prejudice. The four Bomb Squadrons – the 548th, 549th, 550th and 551st – assigned to the 385th BG flew the B-17 *Flying Fortress*.

Methods: Precision daylight bombing was the method employed by the 385th in striking targets throughout mainland Europe, including deep into the heart of Germany, often sustaining heavy losses. The 385th was escorted by P-38s, P-47s and (beginning late 1943) P-51s. These “little friends” exacted a heavy toll on Luftwaffe fighter defense.

Men: Ray provided an intimate depiction of life at Great Ashfield, the airbase of the 385th. Several individuals were profiled, validating the term *The Greatest Generation*. Scenes and descriptions of “downtime” activities were provided, even including listening to “Lord Haw Haw” (German propaganda broadcasts) as well as images of pin-ups.

Maelstrom: The core of the presentation described exactly how a mission unfolded, beginning with the directive from Bomber Command, down through Air Division, Combat Wing and to the specific Bombardment Groups. The mission itself began with a “green flare” fired to authorize aircraft launch, with the group proceeding to an “AP” (Assembly Point) to form with other groups into the bomber-stream, which then navigated to the “IP” (Initial Point) where the bombardier (and more specifically the Norden bombsight) would take over the aircraft for the perilous straight-and-level run to the target. After dropping their bombs the group would proceed to the “RP” (Rendezvous Point, or Rally Point), whereupon they would reform into defensive “box” formations for their return.

At each stage of the mission danger was present, even before the enemy was encountered. Inclement weather, leading to too-frequent air collisions, the bitter cold and oxygen starvation were life-threatening throughout a mission. (The aircraft were not heated and had open windows, e.g., for the waist-gunners.)

What awaited them was a three-tiered German defense: On the way to the target (Luftwaffe), at the target (Flak) and on the way home (Luftwaffe). Ray described the evolving strategies employed by both sides during these encounters.

Memoriam: Ray closed the presentation describing the supreme effort expended by the 385th, and by extension, the 8th Air Force. The 385th was awarded five Combat Battle Stars, and not one, but *two*, Presidential Unit Citations. He described several memorials commemorating the 385th, including one in Perle, Luxembourg, honoring the twenty-men lost when two of their aircraft collided above Perle shortly after D-Day. His final statement was a recitation of two verses from *The Corps*, a West Point anthem, which succinctly summed up the contribution of these men of *The Greatest Generation*.



SPECIAL MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS / OF SPECIAL INTEREST & UPCOMING EVENTS

>>> **(FINAL) ATTN: ROUND TABLE MEMBERS / OFFICERS / STAFF / GUESTS ALL OTHERS:
PETITE AUBERGE MOVING OUT OF TOCO HILLS SHOPPING CENTER**

The Atlanta WW II Round Table is making a major change beginning in January 2017 due to the closure of the current Petite Auberge Restaurant in the Toco Hills Shopping Center on N. Druid Hills Rd. in Atlanta, which has been our meeting venue for over 13 years. The Petite is closing effective December 31st, 2016, which has resulted in a decision to move our meeting venue to ***The Dunwoody United Methodist Church at 1548 Mount Vernon Road in Dunwoody, GA 30338.***

PLEASE SEE THE ENCLOSED MAP FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE DUNWOODY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
Our first meeting at the Church will be on January 19th, 2017. Social half-hour 11AM-11:30AM. Meeting start time 11:30AM



>>> **(UPDATED) AIR FORCE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION - Georgia Chapter - MEETING REMINDER** The Georgia Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Association is meets monthly at Clairmont Place, 2100 Clairmont Lake Decatur, GA, 30033 (Across the street from the VA hospital on Clairmont Road). This Association meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month. Please call Brent Bracewell for additional information at 678-416-5749 or email him at brent.bracewell@yahoo.com or email the Organizations Secretary Marc Feit at marcfeit@bellsouth.net to confirm the time and date of their next scheduled meeting.

>>> **(REMINDER) IMMEDIATE - WITNESS-TO-WAR ORGANIZATION AND ATLANTA WW II ROUND TABLE** – I am pleased to announce that the *Witness-To-War. Org* Organization and the Atlanta WW II Round Table have agreed to work closely together as our organizations continue to evolve in 2014-2015. *Witness-To-War Foundation* Director Emily Carley was authorized by her CEO, Tom Beaty, to offer their video and audio recording services at each of our meetings. Emily Carley or Video Specialist Martin Madert will now be recording the Round Table meetings. Veterans from all services and all conflicts are asked to sign-up with Emily or Martin and provide them with their oral histories. These interviews can be done at their extensive studios in Norcross. WTW can also arrange to come to a veteran’s home to conduct an interview. You can contact Emily or Martin at our regular meetings or via email: Emily Carley’s email: emily@witnessowar.org and Martin’s: seb@witnessowar.org or by calling Emily at 770-481-3018.

>>> **(UPDATED) UPCOMING SPEAKERS for – November 2016 –March 2017**– Commander & Program Chairman Pete Mecca, with the assistance of the Program Committee, have lined-up some impressive speakers for us for our 2016-2017 campaign: **December 15th – John Wagnon – U.S. Navy ‘Snippets From my World War II Experiences’**; January 19th, 2017 – Greg McClelland – *‘Inside Hitler’s Wolf’s Lair’*; February 16th – Gary Weller – Georgia Airborne Association – *‘WW II Airborne Operations – Beginnings of the Army Airborne’*; March 16th, 2017 – William ‘Billy’ McDonald - *Flying Tigers - The Wingman for Chennault*. Please note that the speaker’s engagements are subject to change. Thank-You Pete for taking on this very difficult endeavor and for your continuing efforts to seek-out and engage excellent speakers for our meetings. Should any member have a suggestion or lead for Pete relative to a qualified Speaker, please contact Commander Mecca at 770-354-9697 or via email at petemecca@gmail.com



Monthly Quote:

Jacob Devers was the most important World War II general you never heard of. *"He was one of the most underrated American generals of the 20th century" He was capable and decisive, a technological innovator who modernized the tank force and had a knack for managing enormous organizations."*

"He was second only to Eisenhower in his knack for getting along with foreign allies, a priceless gift in coalition warfare. Devers' lesson is that leaders need to adapt to those they serve."

Rick Atkinson, author of *"The Guns at Last Light,"*