



THE ATLANTA WORLD WAR II ROUND TABLE
PRESERVING HISTORY

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

VOL. 31 No. 6

306th MEETING

Editor: John E. Kovach

Tel: (770) 928-4579

Contributor(s) To This

Newsletter

* Gary Weller

* Greg McClelland

* 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

Tel: 770-788-2454

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: FEBRUARY 16th, 2017 (THURSDAY) >>>> *Next Meeting March 16th*

Time: Social Half-Hour: **10:45 AM – 11:15 AM** > **BUFFET LINE OPENS AT 11:15 AM – MEETING START TIME 11:45 AM – 12:00 NOON**

** **DUNWOODY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (DUMC)**

1548 Mount Vernon Rd, Dunwoody, GA 30338

Website: www.dunwoodyumc.org - Church Phone: 770-394-0675

Meal Price: \$ 20.00 (Individual) / \$ 35.00 (Couples) Complimentary For Members(Current With Dues)&One(1)Guest/Courtesy Reservation Requested

Speaker(s): Gary Weller

Subject: - ‘WW II Airborne Operations – Beginnings of the Army Airborne’

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 January 19th, 2017 Meeting: ± 120))

Speaker for February 16th, 2017 – Gary Weller (To Be Introduced By Commander Mecca)

The FEBRUARY 16th, 2017 (THURSDAY) Meeting of the Atlanta WW II Round Table will feature Gary Weller as our speaker.

Gary was born June 7th 1935, oldest of four boys, Son of a supervising engineer, responsible for the construction of many Nuclear plants in the U.S.A.. He attended Cleveland Hill High School, ran track and field along with playing H.S. football and then went onto to receive a degree in Construction Management at Erie County College.

Weller served with the 307th Engineers, 82nd Airborne Division, 1956 thru 1959 as a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), Demolition Expert. On leaving the service, he became a life member of the 82nd Airborne Association and was instrumental in establishing the only Association Museum, housed in the facilities of the Association chapter, located in Buffalo, New York.

After moving to Georgia, he and two others formed the North Georgia Airborne Association, centralized in the Gainesville area. He is presently Chair of the organization. The group, made up of ex-paratroopers, is very active and recently has agreed to begin sponsoring service dogs for veterans in need.

Gary’s program to the Round Table begins with how the US Army Test Platoon was established at Fort Benning and their training there and at Coney Island, N.Y. He will then tell us about how the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion became known as the Triple Nickels, Smoke Jumpers.

Weller will then bring us to Camp Toccoa, highlighting its history - then the famous 115 mile March to Atlanta in which the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment was ordered to march from Toccoa to Ft. Benning, GA in December 1942.

Gary will detail the 82nd’s first Army combat jump into North Africa against The French Vichy in April 1943. He will finish his program with a brief on the WW II Airborne Operations: *Husky*, *Overlord* and *Market Garden*.

Gary has been married for 53 years to Mary McNeil of Buffalo. He’s the father of two boys, both Eagle Scouts. His son Jay is now an Attorney and other son Keith is an IT Manager for the Cancer Institute of America.

Gary’s hobbies are studying the American Civil War and playing the saxophone. When he was in Buffalo, he had a group that played to the German population.

Please welcome Gary Weller as our FEBRUARY 16th, 2017 (3rd Thursday) speaker (306th Meeting.)

Speaker Review for January 19th, 2017 – Greg McClelland (Introduced By Commander Mecca)

The January 19th, 2016 (Thursday) meeting of the Atlanta WW II Round Table featured as our speaker Greg McClelland. Greg’s passion is the subject of the German Resistance in the Third Reich and the Nazi crimes against German citizens and humanity in general. He is considered by many to be an expert on this topic and provided a grand presentation to us at our January 19th inaugural meeting at the Dunwoody United Methodist Church.

Greg was able to weave together a combination of historical facts and insights about Hitler’s Eastern Front Military Headquarters which Hitler named *The Wolfs Lair*, as well as the primary German Officers

CONTINUED ON BACK

and Staff that occupied the HQ with Hitler. Not many of the Round Table members knew that at the height of the war, over 2000 military staff, guards, and support personnel worked at *The Wolf's Lair*, which consisted of over 80 buildings including several heavy bunkers. The area was subdivided into three security zones: *Sperrkreis I* was the inner area where Hitler and his closest staff lived and worked, *Sperrkreis II* was an adjacent area where support staff lived and worked, and *Sperrkreis III* was an outer security zone that surrounded the other two, and contained defense and guard forces and flak batteries. A minefield of some 50,000 land mines (about 2000 were never retrieved from the area) and anti-personnel mines surrounded the entire area.

Hitler would spend the better part of the war's final years at the site. Of course the Germans were mainly looking to protect Der Fuhrer from outside threats (*The Wolf's Lair* was surrounded by thick forest and swamps). Thus when a German colonel, looking to put an end to Hitler's mad rule, concocted a plan to assassinate the Führer, he chose *The Wolf's Lair* as the place to do it.

Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg was able to sneak a suitcase bomb into a meeting room where he knew Hitler would be. Miraculously, and unfortunately, Hitler survived the blast with minor injuries but suffered tremendously from both physical and mental pain, anguish and paranoia.

Because this was the Round Table's first meeting at the Church, Greg's time was slightly limited. He was unable to bring forth the following points in his presentation that he was not able to tell the audience:

- 1) Colonel Stauffenberg's July 20, 1944 bomb attempt was his third assassination attempt to kill Hitler in nine days since July 11th. It marked the last of at least 22 attempts by Germans to kill Hitler.
- 2) Between 1933 and 1945, three million Germans were imprisoned in concentration camps and prisons. 800,000 of these were held for active counts of resistance against the Nazi regime.
- 3) Had Stauffenberg's July 20th bomb plot succeeded in killing Hitler along with the coup to overthrow the Nazi regime, the war would have been shortened by over nine months. More people died during the last nine and a half months of the war, than during the first four years and ten months. Therefore the death toll would have been cut in half, saving approximately 27 million lives on all sides!

Thank-You Greg for keeping history alive with us on January 19th and for a job well done.

I am pleased to announce that we have four (4) New Members who have joined us since our December 2016 / January 2017 Meeting(s).

WW II Veteran Gabriel A. DaCosta-Gabriel served in the USAAF – 20th Air Force and flew 33 missions over Japan and China.

Veteran Mike Joiner – Mike served in the USAF

Joyce Mecca – Wife of Commander Pete Mecca and a Round Table Asst. Chaplain and Secretary.

Bruce D. McFadden – Bruce is a CPA and lives in Dunwoody, his father served in WW II.

Please welcome Gabriel, Mike, Joyce and Bruce as our newest members at the February 16th, 2017 meeting.

SPECIAL MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS / OF SPECIAL INTEREST & UPCOMING EVENTS

>>> ***(Final) ATLANTA WW II ROUND TABLE – FEBRUARY 16th, 2017 MEETING & BANQUET*** – A Reservation Form and Return Address Envelope were enclosed with the January 2017 Newsletter for the February 16th, 2017 (3rd Thursday) Atlanta WW II Round Table Meeting & Banquet. Please return this Reservation Form to Finance Officer Jay Lenny in the enclosed envelope if you intend to attend the Meeting/Banquet or call him at 678-288-9175.

This year's Meeting/Banquet meals will be paid for courtesy of the Round Table for all members whose dues are current + one guest. The guest can be a spouse, partner or significant other. Meal pricing for Non-Members and those not current on their dues is \$ 20.00 per dinner of \$ 35.00 per couple. Meeting/Banquet start-time will be the same as our regular meetings, Social Half-Hour 10:45AM-11:15AM, Meeting Start-Time 11:45AM-12:00 Noon.

Church Administrator Debbie Collins has assured Commander Mecca that the meal will be served buffet-style but she will instruct her kitchen-staff to prepare special entrees and desserts for the Banquet. Those members or guests needing help in getting their meals to their tables will be assisted by Round Table Members or the Kitchen Staff at the Church.

Jill Berry and her daughter Jade plan to provide the entertainment during the Social Half-Hour with songs from the 1940s-1950s and *The Stuart-McGee Trio* will be accompanying her with their wonderful sounds and background music. Please call Commander Mecca at 770-354-9697 or Finance Officer Lenny at 678-288-9175 should you have any questions about the February Meeting/Banquet.

>>> **(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** The Witness to War Foundation, which works on a volunteer basis to videotape all Roundtable meetings, is a local non-profit that conducts video interviews with combat veterans of all wars. Veterans from all services and all conflicts are asked to sign-up for an interview with Martin Madert and provide them with their oral histories. Sign-up sheets are available at all meetings or you can contact Martin via email at martin@witnessowar.org or by phone at 770-628-0024. If you have general questions around Witness to War, you may contact Director, Emily Carley, at emily@witnessowar.org or 770-481-3018. Additional information on the Foundation can be found at www.WitnessToWar.org.

>>> **(UPDATED) UPCOMING SPEAKERS for – February 2017 –June 2017**– Commander & Program Chairman Pete Mecca, with the assistance of the Program Committee, have lined-up some impressive speakers for us for our 2017-2018 campaign:; **February 16th, 2017 (3rd Thursday) - Meeting and Banquet – Gary Weller – Georgia Airborne Association – ‘WW II Airborne Operations – Beginnings of the Army Airborne’**; **March 16th, 2017 (3rd Thursday) – William ‘Billy’ McDonald - Flying Tigers - The Wingman for Chennault**; **April 20th, 2017 (3rd Thursday) – George Wilkerson**; **May 16th, 2017 (3rd TUESDAY) – General Turner**; **June 15th, 2017 (5th THURSDAY)**. 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 Quotes:

General Matthew Ridgeway, said in his memoirs, "Soldier" (Harper & Brothers, 1956 "To my mind, the highest service a man can perform is to lead other men into battle. It requires of him courage and competence of the highest order, and a complete willingness to sacrifice his own life for them, if need be."

Matthew Bunker Ridgeway, Commanding General, 82 Airborne Division/ WW II (March 3, 1895 – July 26, 1993)