



# ***82nd Fighter Group Association Newsletter***

Issue 102

April 2021

## **Our Air Force Heritage Units**



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Lowell Phillips

# The President's Page

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Bruce Loewenberg

Dear 82nd Family:

As we still wonder about another year with the COVID-19 virus and the uncertainty of the following months, the Executive Committee is in continuous discussion about our next reunion. The Parliman's and Powell's are still involved with the planning and are looking at late spring or early summer of 2022. By this fall or early January 2022 I hope we should have a handle on this virus and will be able to make a decision that we all can travel and gather together safely.

We are still discussing the future of the 82nd FGA. After 40 years plus of reunions, loss of original members, health and other life events, this reunion may be our last as a formal organization. Our reunion hosts are currently looking at the P38 National Museum at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, CA as well as other options for 2022.. We will keep you informed and involved as everything develops.

I have appointed Bruce Loewenberg as FGA Historian. Bruce is active with other WWII historic organizations. He has a newspaper article that appears in this issue. Jerry Martin is continuously updating our website as new photos and information become available. [www.82ndfightergroup.org](http://www.82ndfightergroup.org) John Parliman is doing the same through the newsletter and our group Facebook page. Together, they will continue to keep you informed about the FGA and related areas of interest.

Adorimini,  
*Lowell*

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**A Non-profit,501(c)(19) Organization**

# Treasurer's Report

## 82nd FGA FINANCIAL STATEMENT

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

Beginning Balance:		\$3,435.81
Receipts:		
Donations	\$100.00	
Dues_2019	\$150.00	
Dues_2020	\$100.00	
Reunion 2019	\$7,214.13	
Total Receipts		\$7,564.13
Payments:		
Newsletter	(\$55.98)	
Reunion 2019	(\$6,671.34)	
Reunion 2020	(\$440.00)	
Website Hosting	(\$120.00)	
Total Payments		(\$7,287.32)
Ending Balance:		\$3,712.62

Respectfully Submitted,

Marc Buonaguidi, Treasurer

NOTE: Balance as of 3/5/2021: \$5,597.46.

Dues reminders for 2021 are being sent out.

## Keeping in Touch

**Fran Kane** sent a nice email and followed it with a picture of your editor and John. She also sent a copy of 'End Game' written by Lobo Blanco (aka **John Cox 96th**). End Game is about the last days of the Luftwaffe during WWII. His two other works are Balkan Thunder and The Pilot. They are short reads that, though fiction, give a first hand perspective based on his experience through his characters.

**Nancy Manduano** tells us Covid has been very hard on her family with Olen in isolation. She says Olen would appreciate any correspondance from the FGA family - email, texts, notes - which they read to Olen when he can't read them on his own. Nancy thanks you all for your thoughts, love and prayers. (c/o Nancy at 1015 E 19th St, Tulsa, OK 74120)

**Steve Blake**, former FGA historian and co-author of 'Adorimini', has written a new book, 'Lightning Strikes, The Lockheed P-38'. It is filled with the history of the P-38 through development, testing, and operations, missions and stories of all units and a stunning array of photos. Available through the P-38 National Association website.

# Reunion Update

Hello fellow 82nd Fighter Group members!

First, Steve and I hope everyone is doing well. Just like everyone, the last 12 months has been challenging, to say the least. Who would have guessed I'd be looking for TP on line? Steve and I have been in frequent contact with our co-hosts, John and Judy, over the past year. Due to the pandemic, the four of us decided to postpone the 2020 reunion from September 2020 to June 2021 thinking everything would be up and running by then. Now that we are approaching June 2021, we realize that the reunion is still not possible. The Air Force Academy is currently under a public health emergency until May 6, 2021 and there is always the possibility it could be extended. Since going to the Academy was one of the main reasons we chose Colorado Springs CO for the reunion, ***it has been decided to cancel the reunion this year so we can focus on the 2022 reunion.***

How does March Field in Riverside California sound for 2022?!! Or maybe one of our Air Force Heritage Units. The 82nd and 97th are currently at Sheppard AFB in Texas.

It's been a long time since the wonderful reunion in Dayton Ohio and we are ready to see all of our 82nd FGA friends and family. It saddens us that we won't be doing a reunion in Colorado Springs where there are so many wonderful things to do but we're looking forward to a blow-out reunion in 2022. So, everyone please take care and we'll keep you posted regarding the next reunion.

Warm wishes,

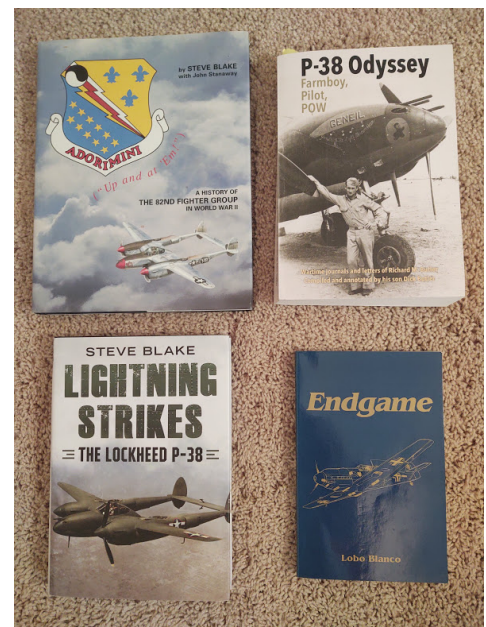
***Peggy Powell***

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## 82nd FGA Authors Highlighted

Steve Blake and John Cox are noted on the previous page.

**Dick Butler**, son of Richard M Butler 97th, recently released 'P-38 Odyssey - Farmboy, Pilot, POW' as a tribute to his dad. The book is filled with photos, mission reports and stories during WWII. Of particular note is the depth of information on the history of the Sergeant Pilots who comprised half of the initial flying personnel of the 82nd.



# The Origin of Our Heritage Units

The history of the **82d Operations Group** goes back to 13 January 1942, when the War Department constituted the 82d Pursuit Group (Interceptor). The 82d was activated at Harding Field, Baton Rouge, Louisiana on 9 February 1942. From February 1942 to 9 September 1945, the primary components of the group were the 95th, 96th and 97th Pursuit (later Fighter) Squadrons.

At the end of April 1942 when it had sufficient personnel and equipment, the 82d moved to Muroc Army Air Field, California, and started formation flying and gunnery and bombing training with Lockheed P-38 Lightning aircraft. Half of the first class of Flying Sergeants (enlisted pilots) served with the 82d. In May the War Department redesignated the unit as the 82d Fighter Group (Two Engine). The group left California in September and arrived in Northern Ireland in October where it received additional training. At about the same time, the Allies launched their invasion of North Africa. By December 1942, Axis forces had repelled the Allied advance, and the long winter campaign had begun. It was at this time that the 82d Fighter Group moved to North Africa to serve with the Twelfth Air Force.

When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, the 82d Fighter Group remained in Italy until it was inactivated on 9 September 1945.

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The **95th Fighter Squadron** (95 FS) first saw service flying the original twin-tailed fighter, the P-38 Lightning, serving in both North Africa and Italy. At the end of World War II, the 95th tallied more than 400 total victories including 199 air-to-air kills and seven aces.

The 95th Fighter Squadron (95 FS) is part of the 325th Fighter Wing at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. It is a combat-coded squadron, flying the F-22 Raptor. Until its most recent inactivation in 2010, it conducted advanced fighter training for the F-15 Eagle.

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The **96th Pursuit Squadron**, Interceptor, was activated Feb. 9, 1942 at Harding Field, La., flying the P-38 "Lightning." The unit moved to Muroc, Calif., then to Glendale, Calif., to begin training for World War II and was redesignated the 96th Fighter Squadron, Twin Engine, May 15, 1942. The unit deployed to Northern Ireland Oct. 5, 1942 and started flying combat missions in the European Theater of Operations.

In December 1942, the 96th moved to North Africa and flew combat missions throughout Algeria and Tunisia in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. The unit then relocated back to the European continent flying fighter missions throughout Italy, France, Romania and Germany. After the war was won, the squadron was deactivated in September 1945.

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The **97 Pursuit Squadron** (Interceptor) on 13 Jan 1942. Activated on 9 Feb 1942. Redesignated as 97 Pursuit Squadron (I) (Twin Engine) on 22 Apr 1942; 97 Fighter Squadron (Twin Engine) on 15 May 1942; 97 Fighter Squadron, Two Engine, on 28 Feb 1944. Inactivated on 9 Sep 1945. Activated on 12 Apr 1947. Redesignated 97 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, on 15 Aug 1947. Inactivated on 2 Oct 1949. Redesignated 97 Fighter-Interceptor Squadron on 13 Nov 1950. Activated on 1 Dec 1950. Inactivated on 8 Jan 1958. Redesignated 97 Flying Training Squadron on 22 Jun 1972. Activated on 1 Feb 1973.

Editor note: The above information is taken from each group's website. Complete and fascinating histories are on their respective websites.



# THE GIRARD GAZETTE

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Volume 142 Girard, IL 62640 Wednesday, January 27, 2021 2 sections – 20 pages No. 4

## Today's obituaries on page 2

Virginia Gies, 96, Girard  
Elizabeth Ferry, 97, Taylorville  
Margaret Dorr, 86, Auburn  
Diana Waterman, 80, Raymond  
Jeanette Shackleford, 80, Girard  
Jolene Brown, 60, Tennessee  
Elizabeth Ferry, 97, Taylorville

## Meetings & Events

### Thursday, Feb. 4

• Do More HCE meets 11:30 a.m., Showtime Lanes for lunch.

### Monday, Feb. 8

• Virden City Council meets 7 p.m., city hall  
• Girard City Council, 7 p.m., Girard City Hall.

### Tuesday, Feb. 9

• Virden American Legion meal and meeting. 6:30 p.m., Legion Hall.

## Coming up

GIRARD -- Saturday, Jan. 30, Girard Samaritan Corp. Food Pantry, 9-10 a.m., members of Nilwood Baptist Church are volunteers.

VIRDEN -- Grace Place Clothes Closet, 517 S. Church, open to the public. Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 9-11 am; 2nd & 4th Saturdays, 9-11; closed holidays.

—Tuesdays: Food Pantry open, 2-3 p.m.

Send your local updates to editor@goldnuggetmedia.com

## Do More HCE gets back out for meetings

The Do More Unit of the Macoupin County Association for Home and Community Education (HCE) will meet on Thursday February 4, 2021 at Showtime Lanes for lunch

at 11:30 A.M. followed by a short business meeting. The lesson for February, "Weighing in on Sleep," will be presented by Donna Greenslade following the business meeting.

Guests and potential members are invited to attend. We meet the 1st Thursday of each month at Showtime Lanes at 11:30 A.M. There is a different lesson each month.

"What is Home and Community Education?"

The Macoupin County Association for Home and Community

Story continued page 6



Bruce Loewenberg and his companion, Gale Douglas, of Missouri, look at the grave of 1st Lt. Ray Wallace Allen of Girard, who was missing in action for 50 years ago after a dogfight with Nazi war planes during World War II. Loewenberg is in the area researching a magazine article about Allen and another MIA Girard fighter pilot, 2nd Lt. Edgar L. Weddle. (Staff photo by Rick Wade)

## Homegrown HEROES

Editor's note: This article is the first in our on-going series called Homegrown Heroes. The subjects of our first entry are Ray Allen and Edgar Weddle.

by Rick Wade

GIRARD — Two young men from Girard went off to war. One came home.

Both P-38 fighter pilots in the 95th Fighter Squadron, 82nd Fighter Group, the two men were downed during separate pitched air battles during World War II, and designated Missing in Action.

Twenty-six years ago last

## To get the vaccine, go to [www.mcphd.net](http://www.mcphd.net)

CARLINVILLE — This week the Macoupin County Public Health Department staff continues vaccine distribution according to Illinois Department of Public Health Department guidelines for persons in Phases 1A and 1B.

Phase 1A health care workers who work or live in Macoupin County remain first priority. Health care workers who

week, the remains of one of those men finally came home; he was laid to rest with full military honors, with thousands in attendance at Girard City Cemetery.

He was 1st Lt. Ray Wallace Allen, who flew missions to protect US bombing missions over enemy territory.

During a pitched dog fight on such a mission to Vienna, Austria, he crash-landed in Slovakia and died. Personal artifacts and remains were delivered to the US military in Hawaii in 1990; DNA testing, just coming

have not been vaccinated should email covidvaccine@mcphd.net with their name, address, phone, email and occupation/employer.

All other Macoupin County residents who are interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine should go to [www.mcphd.net](http://www.mcphd.net) and complete an online survey. (Click on COVID-19 information in the upper right-hand corner,



1st Lt. Ray Wallace Allen

of age at that time, finally identified the find.

Most of those at the cemetery that frigid morning of Jan. 21, 1995, likely did not realize that another young Girard man, 2nd Lt. Edgar L. Weddle, had already been declared MIA in 1943, and still is, to this day.

Weddle is remembered with some words on the tombstone of his parents, Lemon and Ethel Allen, in Pleasant Hill Cemetery: Edgar 1921-1943 Missing in Action Mediterranean. That fatal day was May 6, 1943.

Not much was known about Weddle's exploits during the war or his final moments in combat either ... until Bruce Loewenberg, a cattle farmer from Clark, Missouri, and self-described history "nut," had a chance conversation during the post-funeral dinner with Weddle's sister, Lois Maurine Tip-ton.

Just days before, Loewenberg picked up The St. Louis Post-Dispatch and read a small article about the remains of a WWII fighter pilot being returned to Girard, Ill., So he called the family to express his

Story continued page 12

they receive, when they receive it and which groups the health department is instructed to vaccinate in which order.

When filling out the survey, be prepared to give your contact information including your name, address, phone number, date of birth and email address.

Once you have entered your information, you will need to hit

Story continued page 6

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## Homegrown Heroes

condolences, and was invited to the funeral.

"I had a history book of the unit with me, and sitting at the table with me was a lady from the church.

"In the course of the conversation, she said her brother flew P-38s in the war ... in the Mediterranean. All she knew about it was the date from the War Department telegram on which he was declared MIA."

Sure enough, in the book's detailed listing of every mission, every victory and loss by date, was the name 2nd Lt. Edgar L. Weddle.

The two hometown boys were in the same unit, although at different times. This newspaper as yet has no evidence if the men knew each other.

Born in 1938, Loewenberg called himself a "product" of World War II: his father, Major Jerome Loewenberg, was the executive officer for the 82nd fighter group (from March 1944 to the end of the war), which both Girard men belonged to at different times during the war.

His father was career Air Force, which gave the young Loewenberg a front seat to military history as it unfolded during the last half of the 20th century.

Recently during his research, Loewenberg discovered details about Weddle's unfortunately short, but eventful, stint in the air fighting Germans.

"He was a late arrival to the unit, in '43, a replacement pilot. He came over from the US on a small aircraft carrier," Loewenberg said. "He was in the 58th Fighter Group, but when they got to North Africa, they busted em up because they needed replacement pilots to transfer the planes into North Africa to where they were needed.

"He flew a plane off the deck of that aircraft carrier like the other pilots, then they said, 'Oops, you're going to the 82nd' over there."

Weddle, certified to fly the single-engine P-40, had to quickly learn how to fly the



*Gale Douglas, left, and Bruce Loewenberg of Clark, Mo., searched for and found the headstone of L.T. and Ethel Harshbarger, the parents of 2nd Lt. Edgar Weddle of Girard, last week in Pleasant Hill Cemetery, Virden. Although Lt. Weddle is still MIA, the stone memorializes the young man who died during World War II. (Staff photo by Rick Wade)*

twin-engine P-38, while also participating in combat missions.

"It's a difficult plane to fly if you are used to single-engine planes. He was only there six weeks."

Loewenberg speculated that Weddle, as one of the new guys, "they put them in what they call 'tail-end Charlies,' the last guy on these flights, because that's

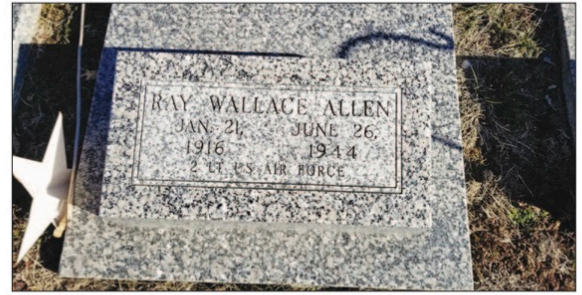
the most vulnerable place."

The 82nd fighter group is made up of the 95th, 96th, and 97th fighter squadrons.

With the Germans kicked out of Italy, the 82nd was poised to invade Sicily, and Italy, with the young man from Girard included.

On May 5, 1944, 17 P-38s from the 95th Fighter Squadron were escorting six B-25s light

continued from page 1



*A tombstone marks the grave of 1st Lt. Ray Wallace Allen, whose remains were returned to Girard to be laid to rest in the family plot in Girard City Cemetery. (Staff photo by Rick Wade)*

*'When these dog fights break out ... you get on somebody's tail and stay with 'em... he's avoiding you and his buddies are probably after you.'*  
**Bruce Loewenberg**

what happened, they didn't have radio contact with him. ... When you're in a dog fight you get separated.

"They don't know if he was shot down, or if it was mechanical. He just never came back to his base that day. He obviously crashed into the Mediterranean.

"When these dog fights break out, they're over large areas, and you get on somebody's tail and you stay with em, and he's trying to avoid you, and his buddies are probably after you."

Loewenberg spent some time last week in the Girard-Virden area researching an article about the two heroes from Girard for the Air Force Museum magazine at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

He spent the day going through the Girard Gazette archives at Gold Nugget Media, looking for family of the two men, and searching for Lt. Allen's grave, and the memorialization of Lt. Weddle on his parent's headstone. He found both.

Bruce Loewenberg said he is very interested in speaking with any family or others who might have information or photos of Lt. Weddle or Lt. Allen.

He is collaborating with this publication, which intends to follow his efforts while we do our own digging into future articles as this story unfolds.

You may call Bruce Loewenberg at (314) 420-2806. Contact Rick Wade at (309) 613-0889, or (217) 965-3355.

bombers of the 321st Bomb Group over Egadi Islands off the coast of Sicily.

They came upon six Italian transports and two German escort fighters, and engaged them in combat.

While the group destroyed the enemy air craft, that day it lost two pilots, one of whom was 2nd Lt. Edgar Weddle.

How Weddle became MIA is a mystery.

In all likelihood Weddle was the last man, or Tail End Charlie.

Weddle's job was to follow and protect the lead plane's tail as its pilot engaged in a dog fight.

"They don't know exactly

## Editor's Note

I am very pleased that Bruce Loewenberg has agreed to expand his National WWII Museum Liaison position to that of 82nd FGA Historian. Not only does Bruce have connections to WWII history organizations but you can also see he has great research and writing skills. Along with his new responsibilities, you will be seeing more of his articles in this newsletter and on our Facebook Group Page.

82nd Fighter Group Association  
3405 Circolo Adorno  
Carlsbad, CA 92009

**Looking forward to Reuniting in 2022**

**Stay Healthy**

**Stay Safe**

**Watch for details**

***ADORIMINI***