



AMERICAN PATROL by Troy White

PREDDY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

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# PREDDY MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

September 1999

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## Fifth Annual Meeting

This year we elected to hold a symposium in honor of World War II veterans. It was held in the Embassy Suites Motel near the Piedmont Triad International Airport (PTIA) on May 8<sup>th</sup>, the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day. The Symposium was planned as a celebration of *The Greatest Generation* vis-a-vis Tom Brokaw's book by that title. The idea was to have veterans talk about their wartime and peacetime experiences. Most talked only about their wartime experiences because time was limited.

Bill Black, our new president, opened the meeting. He said we were honored by the presence of so many WWII veterans (we had about 100 people in attendance). Bill gave the general agenda for the symposium: he noted that in addition to the talks by our veterans, he would ask Bob Reese to update us on progress with the Preddy movie script, and Dolph Overton to update us on North Carolina's plans for the Centennial of Aviation to be held in the year 2003. Bob Reese attended, but we didn't have time to call on him. However, Bob assured me that he is continuing with his efforts to have a movie made on George Preddy. Dolph brought us up to date on the Centennial plans. He is a member of the First Flight Centennial Commission. One item of particular interest is the plan to rename the Raleigh-Durham Airport. One name proposed is the Orville-Wilbur Airport. Dolph said that when that subject comes up, he will definitely propose a much better name: Preddy International Airport. Unfortunately, Floyd Wilson, president of the Carolinas Historic Aviation Commission, was unable to attend as planned. However, Joe Noah and Sam Sox went to Charlotte and taped a 30 minute program on the Preddys to be aired on Time Warner Cable Channel 18 in August or September. The program is sponsored by the Carolinas Aviation Museum.

Bill Black said that we should stop the talks about 2:30 or 3:00 so we would have time to visit the airport and see two things: the PTIA Terminal Building where the Preddy

Exhibit was recently moved from the Greensboro Historical Museum, and the flight line where we plan to have a Mustang, a PT-17 and an Apache helicopter to view.

## The Speakers

After Sam Sox gave the invocation, Rich Preyer was introduced by Bill Black. Rich served as a congressman from the 6<sup>th</sup> district from 1969 to 1981; he headed the congressional investigation into the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Bill pointed out that Rich's wife, Emily, helped Mouse Preddy operate his drink stand, the Mouse Hole, at the Memorial Stadium where they both played tennis with vigor. Rich spoke of his Navy experience on a destroyer under Admiral Bull Halsey. He told briefly about their finest hour just before the Battle of Okinawa. After his talk, Joe Noah thanked Rich for setting up an interview for him with General John Meyer in 1970; Meyer was Preddy's CO in England. Meyer went on to become Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, spoke at the dedication of Preddy Boulevard, and wrote the foreword to Preddy's biography.

Our next speaker was Walker Rucker who, rather than talk about his experiences as a navigator on a B-17, elected to speak about two initiatives the PMF is taking on. The first is to have a copy of a bronze memorial plaque duplicated so that it can be displayed in a place of prominence. The plaque lists 99 alumni of Greensboro High School who made the supreme sacrifice during WWII. The plaque has been moved from the main hall of the GHS to the Sigmund Pearl Field House where it gets very limited exposure. The Executive Committee of the PMF met with GHS Principal Teague and Coach Bob Sawyer to effect a plan to have the original plaque restored to the hall of the main GHS building. A copy of the plaque will be acquired by the PMF for the Field House where we plan to improve the WWII Memorial display, and get other organizations to provide displays for the adjoining walls where the Korean and the Viet Nam Wars

may be memorialized. Another initiative is to ask the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce to present a special annual award in the name of the Preddy Brothers to a citizen who has best served our community.

Next, Joe Noah explained what the gold stars on the name tags represented: a Ruptured Duck, which was given to all who served at any time from September 1939 through December 1946. He also pointed out that one name tag had a silver star, too. The silver star was given to the only person attending who is an ace; that is, who shot down five or more enemy aircraft. That person is Dolph Overton. Then Joe read briefly from letters that were written by members who could not attend. One letter was from Jim Laurier, aviation artist who gave the PMF two portraits he painted, one of George and one of Bill Preddy. The portraits were shown to the audience and then presented to the Greensboro Historical Museum represented by Bill Moore, Director, and Don Henderson, Curator.

Next, Troy White, an artist who is also a pilot and skydiver, was introduced. Troy painted *Cripes A'Mighty 3<sup>rd</sup>* for the dust cover of the hard back edition of *George Preddy, Top Mustang Ace*. Troy and his wife, Mindy, are having prints made from the painting.

Then Ray Mitchell and Bobby Dodd, both from the 328<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, spoke. George Preddy commanded the 328<sup>th</sup> from October 1944 until his death on Christmas Day. Both were invited to simultaneously take a mike and tell their stories. We hoped that having two up front at the same time may make the day more interesting and save time, too! Incidentally, Ray was flying with George on that fateful Christmas Day.

Weddie Huffman spoke of his experience with a typhoon near Okinawa while Ray and Bobby took the stand. Weddie had to leave to preside over his class reunion.

Bill Black then introduced

Horace Kornegay. Horace served as 6<sup>th</sup> District congressman from 1961 until 1969. Horace said that he and Bill Preddy were peers; Mouse was a few years older. Horace served in the infantry and fought in the Battle of the Bulge; he said he was wounded once by shrapnel from an 88 mm round.

Next, Joe Noah thanked his volunteers, then introduced Sandra and Ted Merrill. Sandra wrote a book about her uncle, Captain Donald Emerson, who was also killed on Christmas Day 1944 while flying his Mustang. Donald was an ace with the famous 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group.

Our next speakers were Ralph Lester, glider pilot, and Archie Coleman, an officer with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division who commanded the glider troops at Normandy and Holland.

After a ten minute break, John Faircloth told a bit about the Preddy family, then presented the Greensboro Historical Museum with a book owned and signed by George, and the U. S. burial flag given to George's parents. Bill Moore accepted the gifts.

Col. Bruce Guard then introduced the active duty National Guardsmen who flew an Apache helicopter in for us to view, and Maj. Gen. Hubert Leonard, now a civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army. Gen. Leonard's subject was: "Who will carry the flag?" He concluded his talk by presenting a Secretary of the Army medallion to Joe Noah for telling the Preddy story, for reminding us and generations to come that we have patriots we can be proud of!

Then Gen. Leonard introduced Col. John Collison and Joe Noah introduced Dolph Overton, both West Point graduates. The two shared the podium. John spent 30 years in the Army, but spoke of his recent work in the Middle East. Dolph served in the Navy in WWII; he went to West Point in time to fight in Korea. He is officially credited with shooting down five Migs; he shot down four more over forbidden territory — hence, no credit!

Our next speakers were Fred Baumann and Bob Huddleston, both WWII pilots who knew Bill Preddy. Fred and Bob were in flight training with Bill, and Fred commented on the fact that Bill was the Cadet Commander at two different bases. Bob told about how he proved six aerial victories for a late friend, John Wainright, by finding the award for his DSC.

Next, Larry East told us a bit about the Maj. George E. Preddy, Jr. VFW Post #2087 and introduced the new Post Commander, Al Brenner.

Charles Clark told us about the day he witnessed George shoot down six Me 109s. Charles was a tail gunner on a B-17 on a mission to Berlin on August 6, 1944. He saw 24 to 30 enemy aircraft coming in out of the sun towards the bomber formation. Charles spoke about meeting George on the train going to London just a few days after the famous mission.

Ed Carson and Walter Wright, former POWs and members of the Greensboro Chapter of POWs, spoke of their experiences as prisoners and their weight loss during that time. Both weighed 85 to 90 pounds when released.

Next, Bob Benbow and Doug "Curly" Dickerson took the mikes. Bob, a Navy veteran, told us a bit about Stephen Ambrose, renowned author of WWII stories and consultant on *Saving Private Ryan*. Ambrose wants more stories to be sent to him at the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans, 923 Magazine Street, New Orleans, LA 70130. Bill Moore, GHM would also like those stories to be sent to him at the Museum. Doug summarized his behind-enemy-lines story and gave us a copy of his book, *Doing My Duty*, a must-read!

The Symposium concluded with a visit to the PTI Airport where we saw the Preddy Exhibit, Jeff Michael's P-51 Mustang and an Army Apache helicopter which Bruce Guard arranged for us.

**What a day!**

***The Preddy Memorial Foundation was established to ensure that the Preddy brothers and their comrades-in-arms will continue to be honored for their significant contributions to victory during World War II.***

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