

80th FIGHTER SQUADRON HEADHUNTERS ASSOCIATION

HEADHUNTER HEADLINES



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- **SPECIAL EDITION** -

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"AUDENTES FORTUNA JUVAT"

10 December 2007

Greetings, Fellow **HEADHUNTERS**,

It is with a sad heart that Bonnie & I pass this Special Edition Newsletter on to all our members.

In Memory
Major Norbert C. Ruff
4 June 1919 – 28 November 2007

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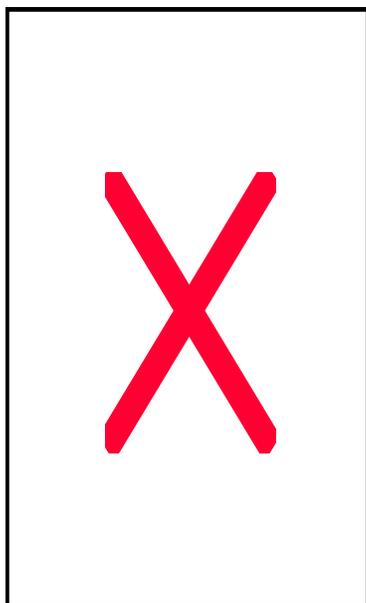


Norb "in his office" in Ron Fagen's P-38 (later painted & named Norb's *Ruff Stuff*) at Granite Falls, MN 28 Jun 06

Maj Norbert C. Ruff, one of our three WWII founders of our Headhunters organization, long-time LTM, and reunion regular, had a severe stroke 24 November while deer hunting in northern Wisconsin. This is the information from his daughter-in-law received on the 27th:



The CT scan this morning [26th] revealed the results we were anticipating....a massive stroke on the left side of Norb's brain with a completely blocked left carotid artery. The TPA was given in the allowable time frame (3 hours after the onset of symptoms), but did nothing to break the clot. As a result, almost the entire left side of Norb's brain shows no activity. Since he is right handed, this side controls all of his communication centers. The family has made the decision to not go with outside sources (i.e feeding tubes, etc) to prolong his life (something he too requested). At this point, he is being moved from CCU to the 6th floor at Sacred Heart. He will be given medication to make him comfortable.



be arriving tomorrow mid-afternoon and we anticipate that Wendy will be in Ireland soon. Eileen is doing remarkably well and finds comfort in knowing that he lived a truly long and full life. As difficult as our hearts tell us it is, our heads know that this is what Norb would have wanted.

On Thursday morning the 29th, we received the following message from Steve Stokke:

Last night we lost a Hero, Major Norbert C. Ruff passed away at approx. 10:00 PM November 28, 2007 in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Final arrangements are pending however; the Wake will be Sunday evening with the Funeral on Monday in Bloomer, Wisconsin. I will forward the final arrangements when I receive them. Thank you for your and prayers.

We passed this information on to all our 700 on-line Squadron members on the 27th & 29th. Here are some of the replies:

Norb (L) & Glenn Hope at Milne Bay, New Guinea Late 1942

“JayBird, Thanks - very sad indeed. How appropriate the P-38 "Ruff Stuff" was featured at the Gathering of Mustangs in Columbus this past fall. The pictures I took there are now among my prized possessions. Godspeed Norb.

Jack [Capt Jack Shelton, M.D. and LTM]”

“JayBird, That's terrible news, but I'm glad he's not in any pain. Please pass along to his family that he will be in the thoughts and prayers of all the Juvats past and present. Please let me know if there's anything we [the active Squadron in Korea] can do for him. v/r Deuce [Capt Brian Wilder, one of our newest members]”

“JayBird, Thank you for the note. This is a sad time for all Headhunters. I had the privilege of spending a lot of time with Norb and also with Kirby at the reunion here in Vegas a couple of years ago. We made a couple of trips out to Nellis to see the flight line, touch some jets and just enjoy the day. I'll never forget that experience. Truly, they are 'our Greatest Generation.' Hope you and yours are well. Check 6, Rosie [Lt Col Pete Robles,]”

“Jaybird- Thanks for the update on Norb. I regret that I'll not be able to make it up for the funeral. Please pass on my sincere condolences to Mark and to the rest of the Ruff family. It was a rare honor and pleasure to have known Norb through the Headhunters and to have shared the comradeship of the brotherhood of arms, even if separated by 50 years. May the sun and wind be at his back, his guns fully loaded and his fuel above half. Here's a toast.... V/R, Deuce [Capt David Paulus, LTM]”

“JayBird, I feel so incredibly lucky to have met Norb when I did, at the last Headhunter reunion in Fort Worth. In the few conversations I had with Norb, he both inspired and educated me. Please pass my regrets on to his family if you have the opportunity. With a Sad Heart, Brandie/STAC [Capt Brandie Maxwell]” (See photo right)

“Thanks, Jaybird. I'll do a roll for him on my sortie tomorrow (as I'm sure many other Juvats will do). –Skrüll [Maj Kevin] Aunapu 301st FS Luke AFB, AZ”

Among the Honorary Pallbearers were four of Norb's closest Squadron friends: Jay T. Robbins, Paul Murphey, Kirby, and Glenn Hope.



Two Fighter Pilots
Norb & Brandie Maxwell (our 3rd female Sq pilot) at our Ft Worth reunion after our banquet 21 April 2007

**We toast our hearty comrades who have fallen from the sky;
And were gently caught by God's own hand to reign with Him on high;
To dwell among the soaring clouds they knew so well before -
From victory roll to tail chase - at Heaven's very door.
And as we fly among them there, we're sure to hear their plea,
"Take care, my friend, check your six, and do one more roll for me."**

(Originally penned in 1968 by Commander Gerald L. "Jerry" Coffee, while he was a POW in the Hanoi Hilton.)



Left: 1942 to 2007. (L-R) Maj Chris Kibble, Brandie, Norb, Maj Paul Willingham, Glenn Hope, Maj Chris Wilkowski, and Kirby (sitting). Right: The cover of Norb's book published in 2006.



NORB'S FUNERAL - DECEMBER 3, 2007



Funeral Services in St. Paul's Catholic Church, Bloomer, WI



Flag draped casket in St Paul's North Catholic Cemetery



Eileen Ruff accepting the flag with daughters and grandchildren



Honor Guard and the playing of Taps





Ron Fagen's P-38 *Ruff Stuff* flying East to West over the cemetery service. This is one of only 4 flying P-38s in the World!



Lunch following burial at White Pine Pavilion. We were all singing our Squadron song *Twin Tailed Lightning!!*

FLYING WEST

I hope there's a place, way up in the sky,
 Where pilots can go, when they have to die.
 A place where a guy can buy a cold beer
 For a friend and a comrade, whose memory is dear;
 A place where no doctor or lawyer can tread,
 Nor a management type would ere be caught dead;
 Just a quaint little place, kind of dark, full of smoke,
 Where they like to sing loud, and love a good joke;
 The kind of a place where a lady could go
 And feel safe and protected, by the men she would know.
 There must be a place where old pilots go,
 When their paining is finished, and their airspeed gets low,
 Where the whiskey is old, and the women are young,
 And songs about flying and dying are sung,
 Where you'd see all the fellows who'd flown west before,
 And they'd call out your name, as you came through the door,
 Who would buy you a drink, if your thirst should be bad,
 And relate to the others, "He was quite a good lad!"
 And then through the mist, you'd spot an old guy
 You had not seen in years, though he taught you to fly.
 He'd nod his old head, and grin ear to ear;
 And say, "Welcome, my son, I'm pleased that you're here."
 "For this is the place where true flyers come,"
 "When their journey is over, and the war has been won."
 "They've come here at last to be safe and alone"
 "From the government clerks and the management clone,"
 "Politicians and lawyers, the Feds and the noise,"
 "Where all hours are happy, and these good ole boys"
 "Can relax with a cool one, and a well deserved rest;"
 "This is heaven, my son.....You've passed your last test!"
 (Anonymous)



Ron Fagen's cranked up P-38 sporting Norb's 80th Squadron *Ruff Stuff* colors at the Oshkosh Air Show in August 2007. More great photos on our web site's Photos Page.

Kirby, and his son Joel, Jay Robbins' son, Robbie and I attended the services. It was 9 degrees with 6 inches of new snow for the funeral, but the procession to the cemetery was close to a mile long in Norb's hometown of Bloomer, WI, population 3374. Although the weather was deteriorating, it was announced to please look to the East for one last tribute to Norb. As we all watched, an incredible sight happened. A lone P-38 appeared on the horizon, and as it flew over the grave site heading West, we could see it was Norb's plane *Ruff Stuff*! It was truly a unique tribute to Norb. Happy Hour with Norb at the Bloomer House, a pub that he frequented, followed the luncheon. We all raised a glass or two to this fine gentleman.

Norb completed his WWII tour with 4 confirmed and at least 1 probable aerial victories in his 125 combat missions. On behalf of the entire Squadron, we wish to officially pass on to his family our deepest sympathies and sincere gratitude for the outstanding contribution Maj Norb Ruff made to the Squadron and our Country. May he Rest in Peace and forever Soar with the Eagles. It was an honor to be your friend. We'll miss him.

ALL THE BEST TO YOU AND YOURS




Jay



Col Jay E. "JayBird" Riedel, USAF (Ret)
THE "HEAD HUNTER"



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