



## **EXPERIMENTAL AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION CENTRAL OHIO—CHAPTER 9**

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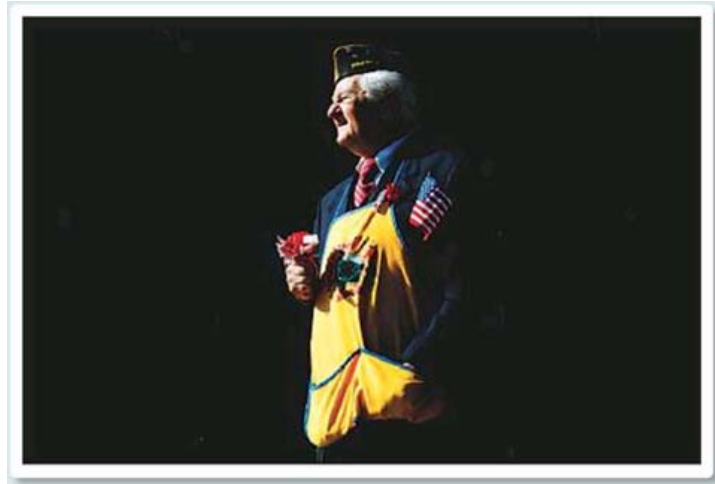
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### **Meet the Vet.....**

January 18, 2007 at 7:00 PM in the admin building at the OSU airport.



#### **...1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Michael (Mike) J. Pohorilla**

This WWII veteran was just 17 when the attack on Pearl Harbor took place. One year later, in December 1942, he enlisted in the U.S. Army as an Aviation Cadet. Being a Depression era boy whose widowed mother could not afford a car; he learned to fly a airplane years before he could drive a car. He was assigned navigator flight school, which assured his eventual placement aboard a bomber.

Mike's B-17G Flying Fortress bomber crew was assembled at Sioux City, IA. The crew of 4 officers and 6 staff sergeants came from diverse backgrounds, but all were very young – most were 18 – 20 years old. Orders to ship to Europe came about 3 weeks after D-Day. Mike was part of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force and the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. England had been at war 5 years before Mike and his crew arrived. They flew on a plane named "Sky Goddess". The crew of "Sky Goddess" from late August 1944 until February 1945 was preoccupied with destroying ordinance depots, tank and aircraft engine factories, Tiger tank manufacturing facilities, steel plants, major railroad marshaling yards and synthetic oil plants including oil refineries. They didn't miss very many German locations. However, the missions quickly shifted from strategic to tactical to support Allied ground forces struggling to contain the Wehrmacht during the Battle of the Bulge. The collective bond between the members of B-17 crew was close. All ten men each had a specific tasks and survival depended upon total discipline during combat. While at high altitude it was one of Mike's jobs to ask on the intercom, about every five minutes, "Navigator to crew – crew check" which was quickly answered back to front in sequence, "Tail gunner O.K.", "Waist gunners O.K.", "Radio operator O.K.", "Flight engineer O.K.", "Pilot and co-pilot O.K.", and finally "Bombardier O.K."

Mike comes from a family with strong military tradition. His Dad was with the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division WWI and was gassed during the campaign in Northern France.

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This was a deadly blow to his lungs, already weakened from service in the Anthracite coal mines of Northeastern Pennsylvania. He died 10 years after the Armistice. Mike's mother displayed a banner with three blue stars during WWII. His youngest brother served on an icebreaker in Greenland. The other sibling was a Chief Petty Officer aboard LST230, which carried those members of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division who had not jumped into France at 2:00 a.m. D-Day onto Omaha Beach on the second wave. He survived to participate one month later on D-Day in Southern France.

Mike is a widower, married 55 years, and has two sons. One resides in Canal Winchester, Ohio and the other in suburban Philadelphia. Mike is a volunteer at the Museum and is active in VFW Post 10523, Canal Winchester, Ohio.