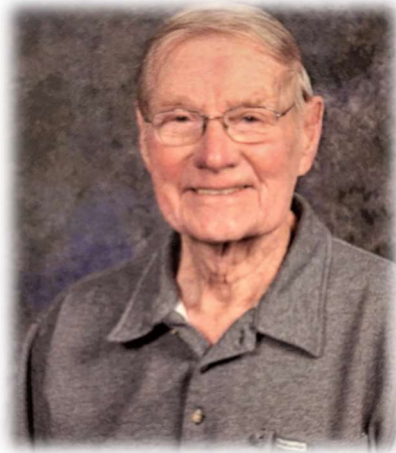


“Member Profile”

This week’s feature: Bob Skufca



The story of Bob Skufca is a wonderful story, and I can only capture a small portion in this brief profile. Bob turns 100 on October 6, 2019. I invite everyone to help celebrate that milestone with Bob.

Bob was born and grew up in Cleveland. He had one sister, Eleanor, who currently is living at St. Mary’s of the Woods in Avon, Ohio. He attended John Marshall High School and graduated in 1941.

World War II was ramping up in those days, and Bob worked for only a short time before being drafted into the Army in May of that year. After he joined the service, and before he shipped out, he was married to his high school sweetheart, Catharine.

He was in the 4th Armored Division in New York when he found out they had a Cadet Exam for Flight School. He had always wanted to fly, and decided to take the exam. Bob finished 2nd, ahead of many college grads. He was sent to Alabama in the Army Air Core for initial training. He had further training in Georgia and graduated; he requested fighter planes.

He was assigned to fly the P47 Thunderbolt, which carries only the pilot. (See the photo of the Model P47 that Bob built). Eventually he was transferred to Richmond, Virginia, and was there for 20 months as an Instructor and Section Commander. From there he was transferred into a fighter group based on the Pacific Island of I.E. Shima which lies a few kilometers off the Motobu Peninsula on Okinawa.

He and the other pilots in the group would fly missions up to Japan and over to Shanghai and other islands. The missions included, dive bombing, and strafing runs. At one point his wing man lost an engine and bailed out.

Fortunately, he was located in the ocean by a PBY Search Aircraft. Unfortunately, the rescue crew crashed trying to save him. Both crews were, however, picked up by an American Submarine. Bob said that his plane was also hit at one point by a shell through the cowling, which covers the plane's engine, but he was able to keep flying. With two extra wing mounted gas tanks, the P47 was able to carry up to 1000 gallons of fuel, which allowed them to stay aloft for close to 8 hours at a time. He was equipped with 50 caliber machine guns and 4 rockets.

Bob was married to Catharine for 45 years; they had two children. Their son, Robert, who is 76, lives in Westlake. He graduated from Kent State University, and has now retired from a construction company. Their daughter, Barbara, who graduated from Hiram College, lives in New England. Catharine was diabetic, and eventually lost both legs to amputation. Bob's second marriage to Joy lasted 17 years. Sadly, Joy died from pancreatic cancer about 17 years ago.

After his active duty, Bob stayed active in an Air Force Group, and he became an Air Traffic Controller, initially working out of Hopkins Airport. When they opened the regional Air Traffic Control Location in Oberlin, Bob transferred there. As with many Air Traffic Controllers, high stress was one of the reasons for stepping aside.

Bob loves to read, often getting 12 books at a time from the used book store, and then selling them back when he wants more. He reads history and military books as well as mysteries. He also likes to make and paint model air planes. Up until 8 years ago he had a 24-foot fishing boat and loved to fish. Although he has recently stopped, he baked cookies for years for the welcome bags given to Prince of Peace visitors. When asked what he would like to say to the congregation as he approached 100 years, he stated. "God bless all the folks at Prince of Peace". What a great story, and what a wonderful man.

By Dick Hardy, Profile Reporter

