



Your Award Winning Hometown Newspaper

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Another Great Louisa County Relay For Life

Another successful Relay For Life was again held last week. This has become a wonderful event that has become a mainstay for the communities of Letts, Wapello and Columbus Junction.

Again the many events that have been held here were again in evidence for the Relay, and it has always a good time as well as celebrating both those who have been successful in their battle with cancer.

It also is a reason to remember those who have been unsuccessful in their battle with cancer, but their memories will be with us for years to come. We may have lost some, but their spirits continue with us.

The Relay For Life is an event that has become a tradition for the County for many years now, and it is certainly a great way to come forward with all of our citizens in making a stand in our long battle and in the eventually finding a cure for this dreaded disease.

Congratulations to everyone who helped in any way in this year's Relay For Life.



The Story of Lawrence Herrick Chapter 6

By Mary Masonholder Wilson
Gazette Staff

The day is August 5, 1944. It is a Saturday when Major Lawrence Herrick takes off from the airfield at Cardonville, accompanied by three squadrons for a mission that should take them from Chartre to Saumur, France.

The mission plan had been put together the night before. The ground crews worked on the Lightnings. The August 5th mission was to be a "Group effort".

The twelve Lightnings, part of the 485th Squadron, were glittering in the sun. They were ready to go. Their four 0.50 machineguns were equipped with 1,200 rounds and the canon was fitted with 120 shells. Each aircraft was equipped with AN-M103 fuses and had two GP500 lb. bombs hanging under its wings, on each side of the pilot.

Major Herrick listened to the last instructions from his mechanic; he then quickly walked around his aircraft before getting on board, using the unusual step at the end of the fighter plane. His aircraft was a brand new version of the P-38J-25-LO, with serial number 44-23588. Lockheed had built it.

Larry also had something else unusual on his plane. He was flying with a new type of bomb, one that had not been used before. It was more explosive. *Knowing this, he had chosen to fly with these bombs rather than have a less experienced pilot do it.* He had volunteered to carry these explosive bombs.

At 10:05 a.m. the whole 370th "Fighter Group headed to course 210 towards Tours. They followed the railroad towards the Arrou interchange and then to the Vendome one. Near Chateau-Renault, the Tours-Vendome tracks were parallel to the Tours-Chartre one. Suddenly one of the pilots mentioned a locomotive not far. In one single hunting reflex, all fighters lined up and dove towards their prey.

This is where our story becomes "blurred." This is where there are several different versions, both from Larry's fellow fighter pilots and also from the French people on the ground who saw it. It is these French people to whom my family talked this past May when we went to Reungy, France. At times, it was impossible to try to "sift" through the information, but Daniel Sellier of Reungy did his best to try to make sure we got as much accurate information as we could. The following is the "crash" story as best we know it.

Major Lawrence Herrick was the fighter pilot who zeroed in on the locomotive. It was carrying German supplies, but the Germans made the French people drive the trains in case the trains were bombed. Herrick first flew over the train twice, doing nothing

destructive, as this was the way pilots warned people below that something was about to happen and thus give them time to escape. Pilots risked their own lives to do this.

Herrick then positioned to strafe the train. (Strafing is the name given to the process of low-flying aircraft using machine gun fire on troops or objects below. *) The Major made a low pass and blew up the boiler of the locomotive. There was a terrible noise and there was a burst of steam along with the terrible explosion. Herrick completed a 180-degree turn, reached approximately 2,500 feet and was returning over the train to once again attack.

But the unexpected happened. His plane exploded in midair! There was a terrible explosion! The time was 10:20 a.m. Children in the school at Reuny, France, a very nearby town, heard this loud noise. One witness told me in May that she would never forget that noise. Everyone was frightened and could not imagine what had happened.

The children tending sheep and other livestock in the fields below were very close to the explosion. Many of them ran for their lives. Others dodged the falling debris. Even those at a distance from the explosion reported they could not believe the violence of the explosion. Some thought their village had exploded. Those in their homes say their houses shook. When I asked these people, "What in the world were you doing in the fields during a war?", the answer was simple, "We were poor; work cannot stop during a war."

The big question is, "Why did the plane explode?" Again, all answers are speculative. However, evidence leads one to believe that the exploding locomotive under the fighter plane may have damaged the plane or caused something to happen to these very, very explosive bombs. Other theories purport that Herrick may have been trying to release the bombs in his plane, again on the train below, and they did not release properly—the plane was new and different, the bombs, as constantly mentioned, were highly explosive. A number of things could have happened.

Whatever the case, the plane exploded. His fellow pilots simply report, "That's what happened; the plane exploded." Of the French ground witnesses, Mme. LeBreton says she saw two bombs pass over her head. Mr. Duchemin says that an engine and a wing fell in his parents' field and burned for a long time. Mme. Cabonn says she could smell the odor of the burning fuel.

What seems strange is that one witness said, "We all ran to the crash site. We did not think. We just ran. We could not believe what had happened in our small

village. We had no idea why we were running—maybe that's what children do." It is easy for me to believe this is exactly what they did because my family was shocked when this past May we were taken to a room full of the pieces of Lawrence's plane. We were dumbfounded that people still had these plane pieces!

Daniel Sellier, who coordinated our trip to France in May, found the witnesses, and did much of the research on Lawrence, told us that he had put an ad in the local paper asking if anyone had pieces of the plane from the August 5th, 1944 explosion of an American fighter plane. Sellier said the pieces started pouring in. In fact, as of this writing, Sellier tells us that they are still coming in and they will be put in the town museum. We met some of the people who had donated them, and I was so moved by this selfless act. We had some of these pieces shipped home.

I can only wonder how my two

brothers, Richard and Lan Herrick, must feel about seeing their father's plane parts, a man they never met or knew, a man whose story is being unfolded in another country. Physically holding these pieces in one's hand is a miracle. We cannot thank Daniel Sellier and the people of Reungy enough. It is truly a miracle of God.

Is the story over? What happened to Lawrence's body? No, the story is not over. It will be continued. And what happened to Lawrence's body will also be told. It is a great testimony to the people of Reungy as they stood up to the German soldiers and protected the body of a young, deceased, American soldier.

*This train strafing was given the code name "Chattanooga Choo Choo", named after the famous 1941 Big-Band Swing song by Glenn Miller.

(As always: credit to **Forced Landing** for the wording and information and to Daniel Seillier and the people of Reungy, France.)



Briefly -

Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet on Tuesday, August 14th, at 7 p.m. Please bring ditty bags if you have any, also, if you have not paid your 2013 dues (\$20), please do so at this time. Verlinda Prior will be hostess.

City Council to meet

The City of Columbus Junction will hold a regular Council meeting on Wednesday, August 8, 2012 at 5:30 p.m. in the New Civic Center/City Hall.

Class of 1977 to holds reunion

The Class of 1977 will be holding their 35th reunion (Yes, 35! Wow), on Saturday, August 11, at the Thirsty Camel at 6:00 pm. We will order off menu (everyone paying for own meals), we will be dancing to Cruisin' at 9:00. We have a number of classmates that we have been unable to contact. Any help, with contacting them, from other friends or relatives, would be so very much appreciated! We would welcome any former teachers who would like to attend! If you have questions or contact info please contact Cindy Runyon Baker at: Randyncindy@iowatelecom.net or Mike Jay at: mikejay59@gmail.com or text or call 319-530-6775.

Class of 1982 holds reunion

Attention Columbus Community Class of 1982 (and parents): Some of us have been making plans for our 30th year class reunion. We still need some addresses; if you can help – that would be great! We want to find as many classmates as possible. Our plans are: Columbus Day Weekend – Friday, October 12th at 7 p.m. meet and greet at Rumors and Excuses; Saturday, October 13th watch parade at Rumors and Excuses, 5-8 p.m. dinner at the Thirsty Camel, then go to excluded location for a night of fun. Any questions or addresses please call Deb (Sands) Halstead at 319-750-2636.

Jack Cecil Memorial Car Show

The 2nd Annual Jack Cecil Columbus Day Car Show will be held on Saturday, October 13th from 8-noon, registration ends at 10 with awards at 11:15. Bring your hot rod, custom, muscle or classic car or truck, even motorcycle to join in raising money for a local family impacted by cancer. This is held in conjunction with the Columbus Day Celebration. Come join the festivities, join in the parade after and have fun with the crowd. We are asking a \$20 entry donation to help raise funds. Top 25 awards, Best of Show, special awards also. Door prizes are being sought, for more information contact Curt Larkin 641-990-4436 or curt.larkin@johnston.k12.ia.us. Special invite to the class of '82 to bring out your special rides and relive some of the "high school" spirit during your reunion!

Cross Country Fund Raiser

The 2nd Annual Jack Cecil Columbus Day Car Show will be held on Saturday, October 13th from 8-noon, registration ends at 10 with awards at 11:15. Bring your hot rod, custom, muscle or classic car or truck, even motorcycle to join in raising money for a local family impacted by cancer. This is held in conjunction with the Columbus Day Celebration. Come join the festivities, join in the parade after and have fun with the crowd. We are asking a \$20 entry donation to help raise funds. Top 25 awards, Best of Show, special awards also. Door prizes are being sought, for more information contact Curt Larkin 641-990-4436 or curt.larkin@johnston.k12.ia.us. Special invite to the class of '82 to bring out your special rides and relive some of the "high school" spirit during your reunion!

Farmers' Markets coupons available

Farmer's Market coupons are available at the Senior Center. Call Judy and come Thursdays from 10-11 a.m.

Louisa County Tractor Ride

The 8th annual Louisa County tractor ride will be held on Saturday, August 25, 2012. The ride will be 50 miles, with a minimum speed of 10 miles per hour. The starting point is Liquid Grow in Morning Sun with enrollment time at 8:30 A.M. The roll out time is 9:00 A.M. Lunch will be at Columbus Junction sponsored by Precision Equipment and provided and served by Louisa Cattlemen's Association. For more information, contact Lee Harris 868-7872, Dan Harris 850-8188 or Dwight Schaper 728-8961.

Lone Tree Fall Festival

The annual Lone Tree Fall Festival is sponsored by the Lone Tree Chamber of Commerce (P.O. Box 675, Lone Tree, Iowa 52755). This year's festival will be held on August 17-18. Events begin at 5 p.m. on Friday, and the festival closes Saturday night at 10 p.m. For more information, call 319-629-4222 and ask for Ken, Kris, Elaine or Russ. Also visit our web pages at www.lonetreeiowa.com.

Masonic Spaghetti Supper

All Masonic members are invited to a spaghetti supper served by the Eastern Star Chapter #445 prior to the regular Masonic meeting on Thursday, August 16, 2012. Serving starts at 6 p.m. Menu will be: Spaghetti, lettuce salad, bread, a variety of desserts, coffee and iced tea.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, August 16th at 11:30 a.m. at the Club House golf course in Winfield.

Broadway Music Review

Come hear 10 talented, local actors in a Broadway musical revue featuring songs from shows such as Les Miserables, Ragtime, Edges, Songs for a New World, and many more! Columbus Junction's own, Wyatt Carson (sophomore at CCHS), is one of the show's participants. The Pearl City Cabaret will be held Friday, August 17 and Saturday, August 18 at 7:30 PM, and on Sunday, August 19 at 2:30 PM. Tickets are \$8 for Adults and \$5 for Students/Seniors. The performances will be presented in Muscatine Community College's Bob Roach Little Theatre. It should be noted that some of the musical pieces contain strong language.



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