



WOLFENSBERGER

Newsletter of the Wolfensberger Family Association

May 2001

Vol. 7, No. 2

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CWO Robt. L. Wolfersberger
United States Air Force, Ret.

Swiss Dedication Set for September 28th in Bauma

The plans for the dedication of the Wolfensberger Family Memorial near Bauma, Switzerland have been set to take place on September 28, 2001. At present we anticipate 25-30 American family members and as many as 40-45 Swiss family members to be present for the festivities. These activities will include a visit to the site where a brief history will be retold, and a short hike to explore the hiking paths, picnic area, and camping facilities being constructed.

Robert Lee Wolfersberger...

...An American Hero...

If you are a fan of television's *History Channel*, you may have watched a film titled "History Undercover" that ran on this channel last year and earlier this year. The film was a documentary about an event that has few equals in suffering, brutality and human mistreatment, yet is rarely mentioned in the history books in our libraries and schools.

Where approximately 187 men died at the Alamo during the fight for Texas independence in February and March 1836, an event frequently mentioned in the history books, many more men died in the "Bataan Death March" in April 1942. Yet this event in history is seldom mentioned. This film was an effort to call America's attention to the men who were subjected to this terrible ordeal. One who was chosen to go to the Philippines to make this film was one of our own members, who was among those forced to take part in the "Bataan Death March".

What a delight it is for me to introduce the WFA membership to our "cousin", Robert L. Wolfers-berger. Robert was born in Bell, Pennsylvania, which was a small soft coal mining

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Then, the group will go to a local restaurant in Bauma or Rapperswil for the Memorial Dedication Luncheon. (Max Wolfensberger has suggested the luncheon be held in the Rapperswil castle in a large historical hall.) Introductions will be made and a welcome extended by Frau Marlies Jucker of Bauma. The Dedication program will include a brief history of the project and conclude with the presentation of Dedication Souvenirs. The chartered bus will leave downtown Zurich at 10:30 AM on September 28th and the following schedule has been arranged for the tour:

CHARTERED BUS TO BAUMA

MEMORIAL:

- 10:00AM Meet at downtown Zurich hotel (where most visitors will stay)
- 10:30AM Board charter bus for Bauma
- 11:30AM Arrive at memorial site on the Wolfensberg, Bauma

HIKE TO MEMORIAL

- 11:30AM Hike to memorial site (about 100 yards)
- 11:45AM Brief history of site

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**Wolfensberger
Family Association
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Larry's Corner....

New Members, Reunions and In Memoriam

In Memoriam

OBITUARIES

WOLFENBARGER, Orlie Kenneth, Jr, born 30 January 1935 in Kansas City, MO, Died 19 April 2000 in San Angelo, TX, the son of Orlie Kenneth WOLFENBARGER, Sr and Alice Lillian KEPLAR. He had one sister Kathryn Wolfenbarger SWEET of Tucson, AZ, who preceded him in death. He met and married Stella Dee BOLING in San Angelo, TX on 6 August 1955. Orlie and Stella had one son Orlie Kenneth WOLFENBARGER, III and two daughters Susan Wolfenbarger KEENUM and Amy Wolfenbarger MCDANIEL.

Orlie or O. K., as he was known, owned several businesses in Mertzon and was active in the Lions Club, served on the school board for 12 years, serving a third term member of the County Commissioners at the time of his death. The football stadium in Mertzon was named O. K. Wolfenbarger Field in the memory of O. K. He was a member of the United Methodist Church and the Lions Club in Mertzon.

Orlie's parents were Orlie K. WOLFENBARGER, Sr., born Lafayette, MO, and Alice Lillian KEPLAR. Orlie's grandparents were Archibald Rhea WOLFENBARGER and Lou Della GILLILLAND. Archibald was the son of William Mathis WOLFENBARGER, the son of John R. WOLFENBARGER, the son of Philip WOLFENBARGER, the son of John WOLFERSBERGER, Jr. born 1730 in the Alsace.

WOLFINBARGER, Otis, Born 12 April 1909 in Irvine, KY, Died 7 March 2001, Burial 10 March 2001 Crest View Hills Cemetery, Dry Ridge, KY. Married Birdia ROSE and to this marriage three children were born Irene, Darlene and James. After the death of Birdia, Otis married Rubie INGRAM. To this marriage was born five children Wayne, Clayton, Wilma, Juanita and Peggy. Irene and Wayne preceded their father in death. Otis and Rubie lived most of their lives some 8 miles NW of Dry Ridge, KY.

The parents of Otis were John Wilburn WOLFINBARGER born in Grainger County, TN and Nancy Ann HORN. John Wilburn was the son of Peter WOLFINBARGER, the son of Joseph Peter WOLFENBARGER the son of Peter Amos WOLFENBARGER, the son of Peter WOLFENBARGER born in 1752 in Lebanon County, PA, the son of John WOLFERSBERGER, Jr. born in the Alsace in 1730.

A Century of Memories for Collier Sparger

Collier Bryson Sparger celebrated his 100th birthday on November 3, 2000 in Venice, FL. He is a great great grandson of John Wolfenberger who founded the Sparger-Spargur family when he changed his name to John W. Sparger sometime around 1795-1800.

A celebration dinner was held on Saturday afternoon, November 4, 2000 at the Venice Yacht Club in Venice, Florida. About 40 people enjoyed an excellent meal and entertainment by Juggles, the Juggling Clown. The dinner was hosted by Alta S. Jeralds Sparger, Collier's wife. Among those attending were Nancy Jeralds Luhrs, Alta's daughter and her children, Cynthia Luhrs and Michael Luhrs and his wife, all of Raleigh, NC. Also attending were Collier's niece, Betsy Sparger Bailey and her husband, Fred, of Shreveport, LA, nephew Jim Siceloff and wife June of Hilton Head, SC and Randall W. Sparger, Jr. of Pfafftown, NC.



Collier and Alta Sparger in a recent photo

Visit our Web Site!

The Wolfensberger Family Association web site is now located at this address:

<http://members.home.net/wolfensberger>

Our mailing address is still:
Wolfensberger Family Association

*6400 North Ann Arbor Terrace
Oklahoma City, OK 73132*

* * * * *

Our e-mail address is:
wolfensberger@home.com

Collier was born in Mt. Airy, Surry Co., NC on November 3, 1900, the son of Joseph Bingman Sparger and Elizabeth (Bettie) Case Sparger. Collier entered the University of North Carolina in 1918 and received a BS degree in Commerce with a major in Accounting in 1922. After working at the University and in Raleigh and Winston-Salem, NC, Collier returned to UNC in 1926 to attend graduate school. While in graduate school, he received an MS degree in Commerce in 1928 and a Doctor of Jurisprudence in Law in 1929. Collier taught Accounting and Income Taxes at UNC in order to cover his living expenses. He became a Certified Public Accountant in North Carolina in 1927 and was admitted to the North Carolina Bar in 1929 and to the New York Bar in 1932. The University of North Carolina has no more loyal alumnus than Collier Sparger.

Collier married Hope S. Carlson in 1932. They lived in New York City three years, Scarsdale, NY 25 years and Ridgewood, NJ for 8 years

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community near Johnstown in south central Pennsylvania. Nothing of the town exists today as it is part of a farm. He was born on the 11th day of October, 1919 to Munden and Bertha Wolfers-berger. Bob's father died when he was three and he went to live with his mother's sister Sarah (Schlag) and her husband, Daniel Evans and grew up in Windber, PA. Windber is also a soft coal mining town founded by Chas. Berwind. His grandparents were David and Marriah (Kregar) Wolfersberger who lived in western Pa. in the area around Rockwood, Somerset and New Centerville. Bob is not sure at this time, the name of his g-grandfather Wolfersberger, but knows he spent several years in the gold fields of California before 1850.

While growing up in Pennsylvania, he attended and graduated from Windber High School in 1937. Probably not wanting to work in the coal mines, in 1939, he was listed in the U. S. Army Air Corp, which became his career.

After his enlistment at the U. S. Army's Chanute Field near Rantoul, Illinois, he received basic training and attended Air Mechanics School at Chanute Field, where he learned aircraft maintenance and repair. After graduation, he was assigned to the 27th Bombardment Group, 16th Bombardment Squadron as a mechanic-mechanician on A-24 dive bombers. This was a new bomb group which was formed after the Air Corp brass were impressed by the use of dive bombers by the Germans in Poland and France. From the Air Force Museum website we learn the A-24 was the Air Corp's version of the U. S. Navy's Douglas SBD-3 Dauntless dive bomber modified for Air Corp use. The first A-24's were delivered June 17, 1941 as the Air Corp service took note of the success the German's had with the Stuka dive bomber in Europe. During this time, the Squadron was stationed at Savannah, GA.

In October of 1941, after taking part in Army maneuvers in Louisiana, the Squadron began the move to the Philippines to shore up our defenses in the far West Pacific. Bob and the other personnel, arrived in the Philippines aboard the USS Coolidge just 18 days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The Squadron's aircraft did not arrive in the Philippines before hostilities began and the ship on which they were loaded was

the Philippines and taken to Australia to await the arrival of their planes. The enlisted men, including Bob Wolfersberger became members of the 27th Prov. Air Corp Regiment. They were settled at Bataan Field where Bob and others were assigned as gunners on 50 cal. anti-aircraft guns to repel the Japanese air attacks. His group also had the duty to cover a section of beach on Manila Bay against a sea invasion. The initial Japanese attack had destroyed most of the U.S. airplanes at Clark Field and Nichols Field, so the enemy had almost complete air superiority.

These brave men held out until April 9th when the field commanders ordered a stop to the resistance and surrendered the American forces to the Japanese. The Japanese had not signed the Geneva Convention which had clear guidelines concerning the treatment of prisoners-of-war. Had they known what was in store for them, they probably would have continued to resist. The American and Philippino soldiers were rounded up for movement to a camp north of Bataan. The "Bataan Death March" began several days later. The first segment was a 55 mile march from the Bataan peninsula to the town of

Douglas A-24 Banshee



This is an Air Corp Douglas A-24 dive bomber flown by the 16th Bomb Squadron in the early 1940's.

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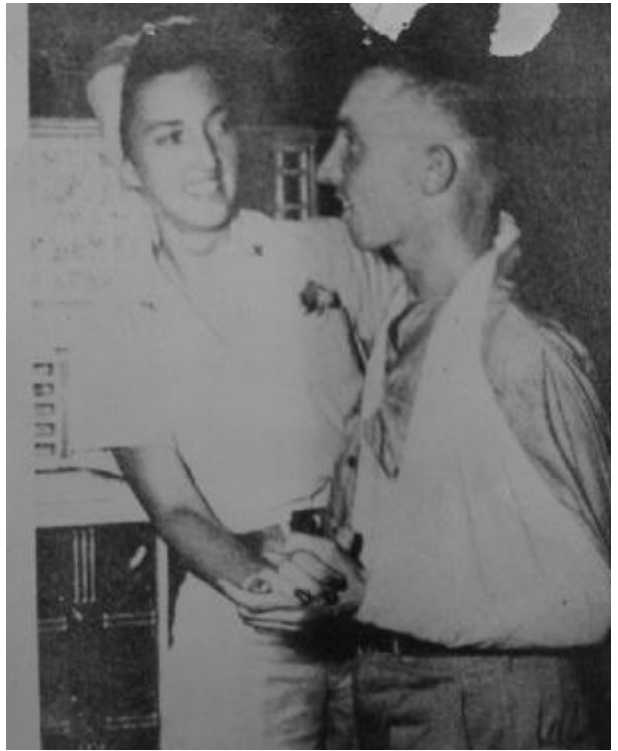
San Fernando to a railroad station. The weather was hot and humid and the Japanese would not allow the POW's to stop for water. Hundreds perished during the 6-7 days of the march from wounds, lack of water or from Japanese brutality.

At San Fernando, the men were loaded into rail boxcars with so many in each car there was no room to sit down. They stood for 25 terrible miles where they were unloaded and marched another 6 miles to Camp O'Donell which was an Army camp the enemy had converted to a POW camp. During their stay at Camp O'Donell, many men died from wounds, disease and brutal treatment. The men were assigned to work details building bridges and other things for their Japanese captors.

By late 1942, the Japanese began moving the Americans to POW camps in Japan and other locations. Bob Wolfersberger was loaded on a ship in October of 1942 and moved to Mukden, Manchuria. He arrived there on Armistice Day, the 11th of November 1942. Moving from the tropics to the frozen north, with temperature of -40 degrees was a brutal shock to the ill fed and ill clothed soldiers. The tough situation took the lives of over 250 men of the 1500 who began the trip.

The American POW's were assigned work in a machine tool factory where Bob and others were set to work moving bricks to the site of a new building. Others did various jobs of drafting, machining-grinding and welding. The Americans were adept at sabotaging the work, so the Japanese broke them into gangs of 20 men each and moved them into other factories. Bob's group was assigned to a leather tannery. They usually were given a small bowl of unsalted, unsweetened corn-meal mush for breakfast, a bowl of milo-maize gruel for lunch at the factory, and bowl of soup at night. They usually worked from sunup to sundown each day. In the summer, the soup occasionally had some vegetables, diced meat or fish. During his stay in Manchuria, he received several Red Cross food packages and he received one package from his family. The American POW's were used as slave labor during the long months of captivity. In September 1945, the Russian forces with tanks appeared to free the

from their ordeal. Bob was airlifted to Manila for hospitalization for a broken collar-bone and poor physical condition.



Cpl. Bob Wolfersberger being welcomed into the hospital after being airlifted from Manchuria where he was held as a POW until freed by the Russian Army.

Bob Wolfersberger remained in the U.S. Air Force after the War ended. During his Air Force career, he saw service at Eilson Field in Alaska, Kindley Field in Bermuda, in New Jersey, New Hampshire, Bolling Field near Washington, D.C., at Andrews AFB, Washington, D.C. and Travis AFB in California. While stationed at Bolling Field, he was a B-25 mechanic and flew as a Flight Engineer on B-25s while providing training and official flights for rated pilots at the Penagon. Later, he became a Flight Chief and Maintenance Supt. (Chief Warrant Officer). He was stationed at Travis AFB when he retired with the rank of

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Chief Warrant Officer after 29 1/2 years dedicated service to his country. After retirement, he settled in Fairfield, California and soon began work for the city of Fairfield, CA at their Water Dept. where he worked until his second retirement in 1980.

Bob had 43 years of wonderful "togetherness" with his wife, Pearl. She passed away in November 1989. They have three daughters, Nancy Hodges, Peggy Heiderich and Janet Kovalchick and one son, Robert D. Wolfersberger. There are nine grandchildren in Bob Wolfersberger's family. In 1990, Bob married Daisy Mae Purnell and they make their home in Oroville, CA.

Last summer, Bob attended a POW Reunion in Ukiah, CA where he met a representative of the film group from Los Angeles who wanted to make a documentary for television about the "Bataan Death March". Bob was selected among others to travel to the Philippines, to return to Bataan and Camp O'Donell to film a moving tribute to those who endured the terrible ordeal of the "Bataan Death March". If it should be shown in your area again, don't miss it. It is an effort to bring the nation's attention to those who suffered and died for their country in a chapter of our history seldom mentioned in the history books.

Bob now lives in Oroville, CA and his address is 5304 Hillard Court, 95966-3803. Drop him a note or a card and say hello and "thank you" to this wonderful "cousin".



Daisy and Bob Wolfersberger of Oroville, Calif.



* * * * *
AT LEFT: Can you imagine the memories brought back as Bob visits the ruins of Camp O'Donell where the Japanese held him prisoner until they took him to Manchuria. This photo was taken during his visit there last year while taking part in the filming of the History Channel documentary.
* * * * *

EDITOR'S NOTE: It was a great privilege for me to prepare this article on Bob Wolfersberger. He is a most modest fellow, but was very cooperative in the preparation of the piece. While it is quite lengthy, I felt I could not leave out any part of it and do justice to this very fine patriot. We are proud to have Bob as a member of the WFA and be able to call him "cousin".

Collier B. Sparger

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until his retirement in 1968 when they moved to Venice, FL. Their daughter, Stephanie Hope was born in 1936 and died in 1993. Hope died in Venice in 1973.

Collier worked as a corporate officer and Director of Ingalls & Co. and Coast Metals Inc. He retired as Financial Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, House Counsel and Director of Coast Metals in 1968.

After Hope died in 1973, he continued to live in Venice. He was appointed to a committee of his church, Venice United Church of Christ, to advise church members on legal matters. In that capacity, Collier was asked by his Minister to advise Alta Jeralds concerning some legal problems she was having with financial affairs. From this association, their relationship blossomed and they were married in 1975.

Collier is now legally blind but still lives at home under the care and supervision of Alta who has been a wonderful wife for over 25 years. His mind is still very sharp and he amazes all his family and friends with his clear thinking and positive attitude. He has been a member of the WFA for several years. An article in a 1998 edition of the WFA Newsletter entitled "North Carolina's Highways Multiplied When J. B. Was The Good Roads Man" was run under his byline. He is a most remarkable man.

HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY, COLLIER!

Editor's Note: Much of the information in the above article was supplied by Randall Sparger of Pfafftown, NC. We are indebted to Randall for assisting us in the preparation of this commentary about Collier Sparger.

The Ambassador Group's Gwen Henstridge can be contacted as follows: Phone: Daytime **800-325-7103, ext. 5966** or **949-759-5966** Mon.-Fri. e-mail: gwen.Henstridge@ambassadors.com or swissxpirt@home.com

Swiss Memorial Dedication Set in Bauma

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12:00NOON Explore hiking paths, picnic area, hilltop site of family memorial

12:30PM Hike to bus for return to Bauma or Rapperswil

MEMORIAL DEDICATION LUNCHEON

12:45PM Arrive at local restaurant in Bauma or Rapperswil

1:00PM Begin program

* Introduction of luncheon participants: Bob Wolfenbarger/Max Wolfensberger

* Welcome: Bob Wolfenbarger/Max Wolfensberger

* Greetings from Town of Bauma: Frau Marlies Jucker

2:00PM Luncheon begins
Herbert and Hanni Wolfensberger, cousins of Max, have offered to sponsor lunch for all American guests.

2:45PM Program continues

* History of Project: Robert Wolfensberger, Heini Wolfensberger, Max Wolfensberger, Bauma Memorial Committee

* The Swiss-American Partnership: Bob Wolfenbarger

* Verkehrsverein speaker: Verkehrsverein official

* Wanderwege speaker: Wanderwege official

* Tightening Bonds Between U.S. and Switzerland: U.S. Embassy official

* Presentation of Dedication Souvenirs (Wood kitchen ladle with imprinted Wolfensberger crest and identification of the event.)

3:30PM Luncheon ends

4:00PM Family social

5:00PM Bus returns to Zurich and hotel

7:00PM Dinner at choice of Zurich restaurants

The Wolfensberger Family Association has arranged with an experienced travel agency, the Ambassador Group, to assist anyone with travel plans and reservations for the Dedication. This is a nationwide organization with offices in several cities. They provide travel and meeting planning services to many companies throughout the US. Our contact at Ambassador Group is Gwen Henstridge. Gwen is a Certified Swiss Specialist, certified by the Swiss government. Her extensive knowledge will be an important resource to assure a great travel experience. Neither the WFA or any member will receive any financial benefit as a result of one's use of Ambassador' services. Note phone nos. and e-mail to the left.

WVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Please send us a photo of you and your family.

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