



Item: AS: A-3

BOT COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

April 21, 2015

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF HONORARY DOCTORATE

PROPOSED COMMITTEE ACTION

Recommend approving the conferral of an Honorary Doctorate on Irwin Stovroff.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

University Policy 2.3 (Honorary Doctorates) provides that honorary doctorates may be awarded to persons of high achievement. Honorary degrees recognize sustained achievement of lasting significance in certain specified areas, one of which is high distinction in public service. One candidate is being recommended for this honor at this time.

Irwin Stovroff is a highly decorated World War II veteran who was shot down in this 35th combat mission over Europe and held for more than a year in a Nazi POW camp. Among other awards, Mr. Stovroff received the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, he returned home, went to school, got married, raised a family and had a successful career. Retiring to Boca Raton at the age of 75, he started volunteering at the Veterans Administration Hospital. In 2007 he learned that veterans with PTSD were suffering for years with nightmares, panic attacks, flashbacks, mood disorders and quite often addictions; and that the VA was not paying for service dogs. To address this need, Mr. Stovroff worked tirelessly to found Vets Helping Heroes, a nonprofit dedicated to providing assistance dogs for active duty military and retired personnel veterans recovering from the physical and psychological challenges they suffered as a result of their service to our country.

Through Vets Helping Heroes, Mr. Stovroff has raised millions of dollars to help train and match service canines with wounded combat veterans. Some of the matched dogs are seeing-eye dogs for veterans suffering vision disabilities, some help detect oncoming seizures, and others help their veteran companions cope with post-traumatic stress.

A book, *An Extraordinary Life ... Gone To The Dogs*, was inspired by Mr. Stovroff's life. A documentary film, *The Gift of Life*, also tells his story. U.S. Representative Ted Deutch has recognized him on the floor of the United States House of Representatives and read his

compelling life story into the Congressional Record. In 2013, the City of Boca Raton named April 22nd "Irwin Stovroff Day."

In accordance with FAU's Honorary Doctorates Policy, Mr. Stovroff has been recommended to receive an Honorary Doctorate by the University Faculty Senate Honors and Awards Committee, Provost Perry, and President Kelly.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/DATE

If approved, this Honorary Doctorate will be conferred at a Spring 2015 commencement ceremony.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

Supporting Documentation:

N/A

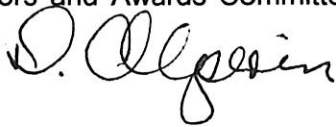
Presented by:

**Dr. Gary Perry, Provost
Phone: 561-297-3062**



ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
Office of the Provost
777 Glades Road AD 10-309
Boca Raton, Florida 33431
tel: 561.297.3062
fax: 561.297.3942
www.fau.edu

Memorandum

DATE: April 2, 2015
TO: Evangelos Kaisar, Chairperson
University Faculty Senate Honors and Awards Committee
FROM: Diane Alperin, Vice Provost 
Academic Affairs
SUBJECT: Request for Honorary Doctorate

I am nominating Irwin Stovroff for an Honorary Doctorate. I have attached the nomination materials. I know this is a bit unusual, but I hope, after review of the nomination materials, that you will find Mr. Stovroff's story compelling.

Mr. Stovroff is a World War II veteran who was held for one year in a POW camp and is a recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, he returned home, went to school, got married, raised a family and had a successful career. Retiring to Boca Raton at the age of 75, he started volunteering at the Veterans Administration Hospital. His time at the VAH segued into the founding of Vets Helping Heroes. He has raised millions of dollars to help train and match service canines with wounded combat veterans.

A book, *An Extraordinary Life...Gone To The Dogs*, was inspired by Mr. Stovroff's life. A documentary film, *The Gift of Life*, also tells his story. He has been recognized on the floor of the United States House of Representatives by U.S. Representative Ted Deutch. In 2013, the City of Boca Raton named April 22nd "Irvin Stovroff" day.

Following FAU's Honorary Doctorates Policy (University Policy 2.3), I am forwarding the portfolio to you for review by the UFS Honors and Awards Committee.

Thanking you and the committee in advance for their time and attention.

Cc: Gary Perry, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
Ron Nyhan, President, University Faculty Senate

American Greatness

November 15, 2010

Irwin Stovroff



World War II hero Irwin Stovroff, who was held for one year in a Nazi POW camp before being freed by allied forces, learned that the U.S. government didn't supply service dogs for wounded soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. So the 85 year old decorated hero from Boca Raton, Fla. made it his mission to overhaul the policy.

"It is a shame," Stovroff says about the lack of an official federal program that pairs up battle-injured veterans with guide and therapy animals that can greatly improve their rehabilitation. "I wanted to do something about it."

Stovroff has raised nearly \$2 million dollars to help train and match up service canines with wounded combat vets. Stovroff is also pushing lawmakers for federal funding to finance the program that he says has received lots of bi-partisan praise.

Stovroff is not someone who shirks away from a tough mission. Stovroff is not just a World War II vet, but a **Distinguished Flying Cross** recipient whose own personal tale reads like a Hollywood movie.

After Stovroff was shot down behind enemy German lines on his 35th bombing flight, he had to hide his Jewish faith from his captors to survive, even throwing away his dog tags before his plane crashed.

His latest mission is to bring awareness and support. "The dog can become his eyes. He can become his legs. He can bring him anything he needs." Stovroff told Fox News with his golden retriever, Cash, lying by his side. "A dog is probably the best thing that can happen to these soldiers."

Stovroff says that the dogs help the injured soldiers, not just in a functional way, but therapeutically. "They need a guide (but) they need the help and love of a dog as well," he says, petting Cash.

“Benjamin is awesome,” says Navy veteran Joseph Worley about his golden retriever. Worley who lost most of his left leg, and severely injured his right one in a 2004 roadside bomb in Fallujah, Iraq says that his service dog is much more than a pet, but a ‘vital’ support system.

“He braces to help me stand up. He brings me my shoe when I put my prosthetic on. He stabilizes me when I walk,” Worley says.

However, it can be expensive to train these canines. Costs to train a service dog can run between \$30,000 to \$50,000 per dog, Stovroff explains, the reason behind his lobbying Congress for extra help. But his efforts are beginning to pay off. Earlier this month, Rep. Ron Klein (D-Fla.) introduced legislation to help train guide dogs and other service animals for wounded veterans.

According to a release by Klein’s office, **The Wounded Warrior K-9 Corps Act** would establish a grant program for organizations that provide wounded warriors and disabled veterans with service animals. On the Senate side, their newest member Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) has also put out a similar bill.

For wounded warriors this means not just a lifeline, but a friend.

“He is a completely trust-worthy companion that does not judge anything. He is willing to help you, and its entire life is based off making you happy,” says Worley.

Credit: <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,534986,00.html>

One Response to “Irwin Stovroff”

1. *Mumsy Weiser* says:
February 26, 2014 at 3:58 am

There is finally a book about the great man. It is called, “An Extraordinary Life... Gone to the Dogs” written by L. A. Weiser and available on Amazon Kindle. A 5 star must read!

Reply



Home → Collections → Veterans



On the record: WW II veteran's efforts for the next generation honored

Boca veteran started training effort for veteran service dogs

April 22, 2013 | By Anne Geggis, Sun Sentinel

BOCA RATON — Irwin Stovroff thought he was going to lunch Monday to celebrate new milestones in the development of his charity, which trains service dogs and matches returning military veterans with the right "ruff."

But the 90-year-old World War II veteran's jaw dropped when he found out he is now part of recorded history.

U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch, D-Boca Raton, showed up and read Stovroff a speech he originally made on the floor of the U.S. House. Now, Stovroff, a longtime Boca resident, and his organization, Vets Helping Heroes, are part of the Congressional Record.

"There is no one I know who epitomizes what is great about our veterans as much as you," Deutch said. "We owe you an enormous debt of gratitude for the heroism you've shown at every stage of your life."

Stovroff, who spent part of his World War II service as a Jewish prisoner-of-war, was speechless at the honor, which also included a live tribute from Palm Beach County Mayor Steven Abrams and a written declaration from Boca Mayor Susan Whelchel that Monday was "Irwin Stovroff Day."

"Oh, wow," said the retired furniture businessman. "Am I surprised. This is overwhelming."

Retiring is not something he ever took to, Stovroff explains. A golf pro swore him off and his lobs usually didn't make it over the tennis court net, he said. Grateful that he survived that 35th bombing run that ended with his plane shot down over Germany, Stovroff said he decided to volunteer to help veterans.

Related Articles

Bill Would Train Service Dogs For Wounded Veterans
July 8, 2009

Veterans enlist dogs to help the wounded
April 22, 2007

Military therapy dog reports for first day at work at VA...
December 19, 2011

An army marches on its stomach - as do other branches of...
November 10, 2013

Animal Therapy Brings Comfort
November 28, 2009

Find More Stories About

- Veterans
- World War II
- Guide Dogs
- Service Dogs

Veterans Admin Home Loans

veteransunited.com/Start

Do You PreQualify for a VA Loan? \$0 Down on Up to \$417k. Start!

Vietnam Era Vets Found

vetfriends.com

Over 1.8 Million Veterans Have Registered.

16.1% 2014 Annuity Return

advisorworld.com/CompareAnnu...

True Investor Returns with no Risk. Find out how with our Free Report.

At first, he worked as a national service officer for ex-POWs, helping them with pensions and claims. But the number needing that kind of help thinned to a trickle, he said. So the director of the veterans' hospital in Palm Beach County asked him to help in rehabilitation for blind veterans, just as the ranks returning from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq were starting to swell. Then Stovroff said he discovered that the federal government didn't have the money to train guide dogs.

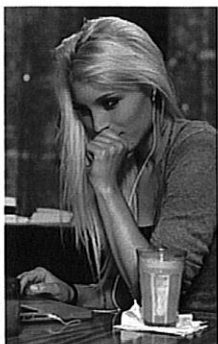
In 2007, Vets Helping Heroes was officially born. Now, the organization has raised \$5 million for the dog training that can cost as much as \$60,000 per dog. And Vets Helping Heroes is nearing a milestone — nearly 70 dogs have been placed in helping roles, according to Pat Levenson, the organization's executive director.

Some of them are seeing-eye dogs, some of them help detect an oncoming seizure, others help their humans cope with the lingering affects of post-traumatic distress.

Stovroff said he knows all about what was once called, "shell-shock" — he had it. And he's always had a dog by his side to help him cope.

"One thing for sure, a dog will give you unconditional love 24 hours a day," he said. "It's love you can't get anywhere else."

ageggis@tribune.com or 561-243-6624



Extremely Brilliant Way to Pay Off Your Mortgage

Do NOT pay your next mortgage payment until you see this! Banks hate it when homeowners figure this out.

[Read More]

Irwin Stovroff: Vets Helping Heroes founder honored for his work

BY: Meghan McRoberts, NewsChannel 5

POSTED: 6:02 PM, Apr 22, 2013

BOCA RATON, Fla. --His plane was shot down in World War II. He was held as a prisoner in Germany.

On Monday, Irwin Stovroff was honored for what he's gone through, and what he is doing to help other veterans.

A surprise luncheon at the Saint Andrews Country Club in Boca Raton was unexpected for the 90-year-old war veteran.

Former Boca Raton mayor Steven Abrams and congressman Ted Deutch were among the dozen that helped name April 22 "Irwin Stovroff" day in Boca Raton.

Stovroff founded an organization called Vets Helping Heroes. With the organization, he has helped veterans suffering with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts by providing them with dogs that help them cope.

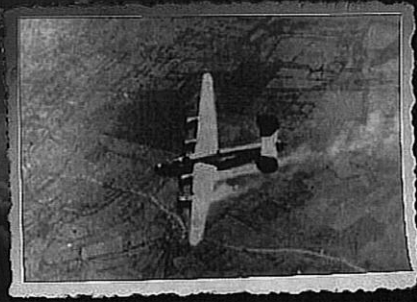
"I came home in one piece, and you didn't," Stovroff said of veterans he helps. "That's why I'm doing this. I want to put you back if I can with a dog who's going to take you back and you're going to have a great life.

Stovroff has worked to send nearly 75 dogs to veterans across the country. Stovroff said he never expected to be recognized for his work.

"You know, I'm not religious but I'm beginning to think there's something special because everybody has been blessing me," Stovroff said. "But that's not what it's about. What it is, we are accomplishing something."

AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE ...GONE TO THE DOGS

Written by L. A. Weiser



HOME

ABOUT THE BOOK

BIO

BUY

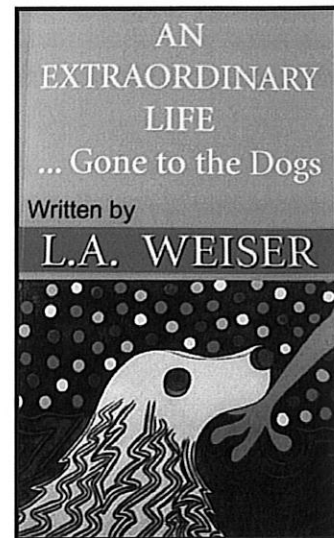
CONTACT ME

ABOUT THE BOOK:

I dedicate this work to our injured soldiers who are in need of Service Dogs and to Irwin Stovroff and his nonprofit organization Vets Helping Heroes, who make it their mission to supply expensive Service Dogs to veterans in need at no cost.

"Freedom is not free. For all of us, who are enjoying the freedom that we have in this country today, somebody paid the price and it becomes your obligation to help them for their future and their lives."~Irwin Stovroff

An Extraordinary Life...Gone to the Dogs was inspired by the life of Irwin Stovroff, a Jewish Army Air Force Officer during World War II. Reflection of human spirit unravels with wrenching drama, honesty, and courage behind German barbed wire. Irwin's memories shadow the present with his past. He illuminates what an entire generation found unspeakable... History resonates through the sacrifice of war, along with the rippling effects right down to their families. Personal ramifications made from both sides of the conflict reflect a deeper twist that transports you through the pages of history as a sideline witness. Irwin's story not only helps other veterans who have not been as fortunate to come home from war in one piece, but also creates an understanding for the rest of us. Being a survivor is remarkable, but being able to cope is invaluable. Now after a lifetime of giving back to his country, he is still liberating other men who are trapped from disabilities with the service of dogs.



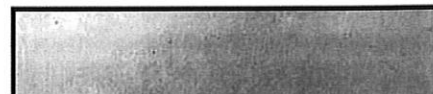
SNEAK PEAK PREVIEW

Prologue: Irwin Stovroff - August 13, 1944

The unspoken truth about being the lead dog is you are the first one into the jaws of a fight.

The static fizz of the German eighty-eight shell soared straight into our number one and two engines. The plane rocked with each impact. Adrenaline spiked my awareness into a freeze-frame existence as flames blew from the engine housing. We were in trouble and the bail-out alarm chimed like a school bell... confirmed it.

I toggled my bombs through the bomb bay doors with an empty wish to hit the bastard who just clipped our wings. I stripped off my flak jacket while I grabbed my parachute from the floor and snapped it onto my chest.

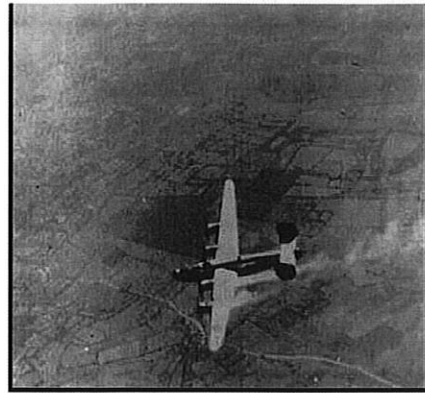


The plane shuttered and Milliken dropped us out of formation as he struggled to hold on. "Get the hell out of here!" echoed over our headsets, "Go! Go! Go!"

This was it... I took out my forty-five and shot up the top secret Norden Bombsight, which was about all I could hit and holstered my gun.

Beckwith, our radio operator ate the rice paper, which contained the plane's secret call letters and frequencies.

We had practiced the jump on a runway, but never had any of us actually leapt from a plane. I looked around to make sure others were ditching; I thought of the friend of mine whose crew didn't follow and how they all perished in the crash. The chutes were on and men dove out head first, just like we were taught. I put my hands over my head and jumped through the wheel hub. Milliken put the ship on auto-pilot and followed out right behind us.



Wind grabbed and whined against any loose fabric as it flapped against my descent. The high altitude pressure of the fast drop popped my ears, stole the breath from my lungs and left my eyes wide open as the ground below grew larger. Dropping from eighteen thousand feet to zero in oxygen deprived air was a challenge to my wits. Fear is a great motivator and I could taste it like a bad meal. The strategy of when to pull the rip cord was what I zeroed in on. If I pulled the cord too soon, I might wind up with my chute sucked into one of the motors of the planes flying behind us.

The wind reached into my mouth and stole my words; I could only hear them in my head. "... eight... nine..." I pulled my ripcord.

The release of the umbrella's silk echoed with the flap as it opened up to the most beautiful noise. Hope filled within my chest as the quick jerk stole the air right from my lungs. I gasped for a breath into thin air. "It worked. I made it."

Bullets whizzed by... the bastards still shot at us. I swung around on the cords like a puppet in a child's hand.

An explosion sent a concussion which rolled through the air causing me to careen my eyes to see. Our plane was well ahead of us over land as it blew apart. The engines tore away from the wings and the propellers wind-milled as they sundered earthbound. Blades whirled a mirrored illumination of sunlight that flicked off each gyration. The fuselage was torn and descended in streams of fire that leapt from the gas tanks, which swirled as if a dragon had blown its fury toward the earth.

The dire growl of engines continued to fly overhead as the formation moved onward, always the mission over the man. We were on our own. A sobering thought. I looked back to the remains of the Passion Pit that littered the air. I swung my head to look for other chutes and counted nine more. We all got out. I decided to take stock in my situation. The way I was headed I could either land in the Channel, which would not be my first choice, or land on the ground. The water looked cold as the whitecaps rose and fell.

I decided to try to influence the parachutes direction by a tweak of the cords. It was something that our instructors talked about when we had ditching drills. When I pulled on one of the cords, it sent me into a violent twist... bad idea, bad idea. The wind kicked me around and eventually pushed me over land which came at me a little too fast. My chute was ahead of me and dragged me into a fence. I kicked and pushed my way into and over as I was dragged by the silk that now danced and skipped across the ground until it stopped and deflated like a giant jellyfish.

I was scraped and had some splinters from the fence but otherwise, I made it without bullet holes or broken bones.

I reached inside my shirt and pulled my dog tags over my head. I took one last look at them and heaved them far away from me. I was advised that if I was ever in this situation, I was to ditch my tags, since they were stamped with an 'H' for Hebrew. It was common knowledge that the Germans were no fans of the Jews. I unhooked my harness that was attached to the parachute, balled it into a small wad and stuffed it into a bush.

“The Gift of Life”, is the story of B-24 Bombardier, Lt. Irwin Stovroff, who survived being shot down and captured over Nazi occupied France, and his subsequent 13 months in a POW camp where he was isolated to be shot for being Jewish. Thankfully before that could happen, the camp was liberated by Russian Cossacks. After returning home, he was able to go to school, get married raise a family and enjoy a long and successful career. After retiring at the age of 75 he wanted to pay it forward and decided to volunteer at the local VA Hospital. His time there segued into the founding of Vets Helping Heroes. This film tells the whole story. You can witness the difference a trained assistance dog can make in the life of an injured soldier, learn about all the wonderful people who make the assistance dog possible, from Vets Helping Heroes to dog trainers, puppy raisers and the organizations dedicated to help our wounded warriors.

About the Director

Louis Molina came to the US. from El Salvador in 1968, with the plan to go to school in America, and then go back to work in his family’s business of television news production. He decided to stay in the US. after he met his wife. By the end of the 70’s he had degrees in Accounting and Motion Picture and TV Production.

In 1980 he worked for NBC news based in South Florida, as a Sound Technician covering the civil war in El Salvador,. For the next 15 years he had covered every major news story in Latin America for NBC. In addition to his work as a sound technician he produced, using his knowledge of the social, political and economic problems affecting the region. He was also required to be a cameraman whenever needed.

In the mid nineties he worked as a freelance cameraman, sound man or Producer for all the major networks in the US, Japan and Europe, working on documentaries, specials and news coverage all over the US and the world. He was part of an ABC news team that won the Alfred I. DuPont, Columbia University award: The Gold Baton for excellence in Broadcast Journalism for their coverage of Haiti.

During his 31 years of freelancing with news organizations all over the world he has had the pleasure of meeting and working with personalities including Barbara Walters, Brian Williams, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, Dianne Sawyers, Richard Engle and more. He has covered the war in El Salvador, the Contra war in Nicaragua, the Falklands war in Argentina, the invasion of Granada, Panama and Haiti, the conflict in the Middle East and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and coverage of the story of Cuba and the US, with interviews of Fidel Castro by Maria Shriver and Dan Rather.

Recently he has worked for reality shows, like “Whose Wedding is it Anyway”, “A Baby Story” and “Bringing Home Multiples”. His last productions were social and sports events and corporate videos.

The list of documentaries Louis has under his belt is formidable. We have been truly blessed and honored that he has seen fit to create a documentary about Irwin Stovroff and Vets Helping Heroes. We knew for a long time that the documentary was in the works and we were of course anxious to see it. We never imagined just how incredible it would be. Everyone who has seen it has raved. Louis has created a shortened version (13 minutes) of the documentary so we could post it on the web. We are seeking an opportunity to get the full length version (94 minutes) seen by a larger audience. If you think you can help please **contact us**.

Watch a short version of the full length documentary



Contact Louis F Molina

Wide Angle Video Productions

4719 Monroe St. Hollywood, Fl. 33021

Phone: 954-981-2240

Cell: 954-257-9866

E-mail: Loumolina@comcast.net

Web site: Wideanglevideoproductions.com

Related posts:

1. **The Gold Coast Corvette Club – Car Show for a Cause**
2. **A Dog’s Life: Vets Helping Heroes “Spokesdog” Cash**
3. **Service Dogs and PTSD**
4. **Vets Helping Heroes Visits Southeastern Guide Dogs**

This entry was posted in **About Us, Service Dogs** and tagged **a gift of life, Assistance dog, assistance dogs, documentary, guide dog, guide dogs, irwin stovroff, ptsd, service dog, service dogs, service dogs for veterans, vets helping heroes**. Bookmark the [permalink](#).



World War II - Prisoners of War - Stalag Luft I

A collection of stories, photos, art and information on Stalag Luft I

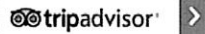
Shocking Gunfight Stats:

Video: Sad Truth why Most Armed Americans Will Lose an Attack:



**Click.
Compare.
Save.**

All the best deals
in one place.



powered by BookingBuddy®



2nd Lt. Irwin J. Stovroff
Buffalo, NY
Bombardier
44th Bomb Group - 506th Bomb Squad

Stalag Luft I - North III and North I Compounds

Email - Irwintfi@aol.com



Dulag Luft Record
(Click to enlarge)



Passion Pit Crew

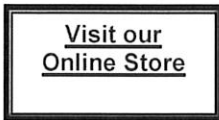
Front (L-R) Jack Bartoli, Navigator; Irwin Stovroff, Bombardier; John Milliken, Pilot
Back: Darrel Larsen, Engineer; Martin Richard, Radio; William Manierre, Co-Pilot; Kenneth Beckwith, Gunner; Morris Larkin, Tail Gunner.

If you are a former Prisoner of War or a next of kin of a POW, we invite you to sign and leave your email address so others that come may find you. Please mention camp, compound,

barracks and room numbers if possible.



[Sign or view our Guestbook](#)



If you would like to help us keep this website online, please click on the above PayPal link, where you may make a monetary contribution to this site using your credit card. Thank you.



[Click to send us e-mail](#)

The Passion Pit



The Times-Picayune in New Orleans highlighted the John Milliken crew for having seven members present at the 44th BG Reunion, and their story has resounded through a number of veteran publications. The Passion Pit went down at the Falais Pocket near Caen on August 13, 1944. Every member of the crew had an experience that was unique, none more so than that of Bombardier, Irwin J. Stovroff.

Stovroff recalls it thus: "It was to be our 35th, our last scheduled mission, we were to complete our tour. Together we had flown very dangerous missions, many of which were deep into Germany. This trip was just over the Channel, the Falais Pocket in France, a 'milk run.'

"We were on a straight run, and were to drop our bombs on three sites, one third each time. Then BOOM! We got a direct hit at the first target. Numbers one and two engines were on fire. We all bailed out, right into the German front lines. On the way down I threw away my dog tags, not wanting them to know I was Jewish.

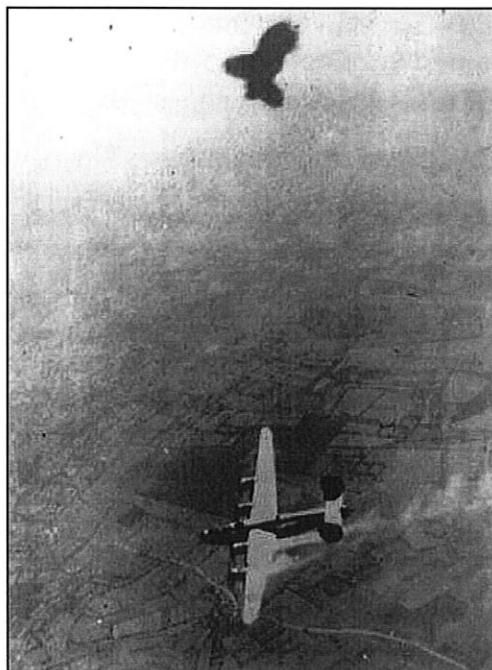


Photo of Passion Pit going down
(photo was taken by a friend and sent to Irwin's parents. Note the tiny white dots - the parachutes.)

Our pilot John Milliken, some how on a truck taking us away from the front lines fell thru the canvas cover and escaped, getting to the allied front lines days later.

"Within a week's time we were taken to a major Interrogation center outside of Frankfurt, Germany. I think it was called Wetzler. We were separated and placed in solitaire, and individually taken out for continued interrogations. The German officer, my Interrogator, asked me questions I could not and would not answer. I gave him the usual name, rank and serial number, and told him that was all I had to give, and knew very little else. On my third trip with him, he said, " I know who you are and what you are (meaning Jewish). He told me he could save my life, then proceeded to name my father, mother, brother, sister, the grammar school I had attended, even the name of a former girl friend. He then said he lived on Ashland Avenue, next to the girl I was dating pre-war. He had lived on the

next street -- Claremont Avenue in Buffalo, New York. He said he remembered being in class with my older sister, and then he informed me that I had been his newspaper boy!! He had come to Germany to be with his grandmother, and stayed. He again said he would help me, and he put a question mark on my records next to religion.

After solitaire at Dulag Luft, I like all others were packed into a boxcar for a 3 day transport to Stalag Luft I. Our train was strafed by Allied fighters because the Germans did not put POW markings on the train. We were also left in the marshalling yards in Berlin during a bombing raid.

Later in Stalag Luft #1, on January 19, 1945, I was separated from the main compound of prisoners because I was Jewish. I know the reason we were not killed was because of the courageous speeches of Col. Zemke and Col. Spicer, who warned the German commander that if any American officers were harmed, they would be held responsible. Col. Spicer was put in solitary and sentenced to death for his speech. He survived until the end of the war.

When I finally got home after VE Day, I went to where this German traitor lived, but his parents had moved.

After the Dulag Luft (interrogation), I later found myself with my co-pilot Bill Manierre in a large room. Bill pointed out a beat up and dirty POW who was staring at us. Did I know who it was? I looked at the man and said 'no'. Bill said, 'he must know you' and I replied, 'I can't figure out who he is.'

Suddenly Bill exclaimed, "**My God! THAT'S MY BROTHER.**" His brother immediately recognized Bill, and they met and embraced.

The Germans were flabbergasted when they found out this was happening. Major Cy Manierre was a West Point graduate who had been dropped into France, and was working with the French Underground when captured and tortured. He told Bill and me to repeat his story, that he was a member of the Air Corps, had been shot down and picked up by the French Underground. If the Germans knew the truth, he could have been shot as a spy. They believed him, and he was sent to the same camp as Bill and I. Their mother received two telegrams on the same day, 1:00 AM, 1:00 PM on both sons - Missing in Action. "fact is greater than fiction."

Stovroff is now a volunteer National Service Officer at West Palm Beach VA Center, working only with ex-POWs to help get pensions and compensations. He has met six ex-POWs that were in his camp. And stranger than fiction, his next door neighbor in Florida was in the same barracks as Stovroff when he was in Stalag Luft #1 "segregated". This man's family owned KATZ DELICATESSEN in New York whose slogan was "Send a Salami to a Soldier In the Army."

Irwin Stovroff - Irwintfi@aol.com
7374 Woodmont Ct.
Boca Raton, Fl. 33434
phone (561) 488 6155



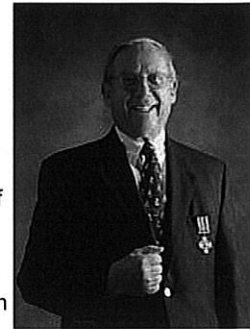
Senator John McCain presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross to Irwin Stovroff in September 2000 - 55 years late.

Spared Death Twice, He Now Helps Ex-POWs

Irwin Stovroff has a collection of war mementos in the office of his Boca Raton home—pictures, documents, medals—but none more striking than a framed photograph of his glass-nosed bomber being shot down behind enemy lines.

Snapped by a crew member of another plane, the picture shows Stovroff's B-24 Liberator trailing smoke from its two starboard engines as it heads into a nosedive, while far below tiny white dots of 10 parachutes flutter to Earth.

"As I floated down, I thought, 'What the hell is going to happen to me now?'" recalls the former bombardier. "We landed right in the German front lines.



"Being Jewish, I threw my dog tags away immediately—a good thing because we were all rounded up in no time. They marched us into a cemetery, but the commanding officer wouldn't let them shoot us. Why? I still don't know."

Instead, the soldiers were taken to an interrogation center, held in isolation and grilled one by one.

"After a few days, this S.S. officer comes in and says he knows everything about me: who my father is and my mother's maiden name, the street where I live, my elementary school, the girl I dated in high school," Stovroff says. "I asked how he knew so much and he replied, 'I once lived a few blocks away from you. You used to be my paperboy. I'll do what I can to help you.'"

Stovroff's former neighbor in Buffalo, New York, had moved back to Germany before the war broke out. And he might have saved his former paperboy's life by putting a question mark next to "Jew" on Stovroff's official identification papers.

Instead of a concentration camp, the lieutenant wound up at a German stalag; still no picnic. "We would have starved if not for the American Red Cross," he says. He spent about a year in the stalag before being liberated by Russian Cossacks, who rode into the prison camp on horseback with guns blazing, winning Stovroff's freedom. Stovroff has a lot of stories, and he tells them with enthusiasm, humor and just a touch of pathos—like the time his squadron was attacked by newfangled German jets over the Baltic Sea.

"These things without props came out of nowhere and shot down 15 of our planes," he says, shaking his head. "No one had ever seen anything like it. One hundred and fifty men ... all lost.

"After we completed our mission, I decided that I wasn't going back up no matter what they did to me. But they gave us a couple days off and we went to London and got drunk and chased girls. By the time the two days were up, we came back saying, 'Ah, what the heck.'"

Stovroff went on to fly 35 missions, ultimately shot down on the one that was to be his last.

"We had our bags packed to go home and were envisioning parades," he says with a chuckle. "Instead we ended up in a prison camp."

After his long overdue return home, Stovroff married. He and his wife Sterra had three kids, and he spent 40 years working for Thomasville Furniture, advancing to international sales manager. The outgoing natural-born salesman was still going strong at 75 when, much to his chagrin, company policy forced him to retire.

Now 79 and living in Boca West, Stovroff helps those who can't help themselves as a national service officer for American Ex-Prisoners of War. He volunteers three times a week at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in West Palm Beach, helping ex-POWs fill out paperwork for pension, medical care and other benefits.

Last year, he was belatedly awarded the prestigious Distinguished Flying Cross, which was pinned on his chest by a fellow ex-POW, U.S. Sen. John McCain. Like a lot of World War II vets, Stovroff says his military experience gave him a perspective of life that has helped him succeed as a civilian.

"After being a POW, you figure what worse can happen?" he says. "It changes your whole attitude. No matter what happens, you've already hit bottom. There's no place to go but up."

From Bocamag.com

[Read Irwin's speech given at the Stalag Luft I Reunion and Conference on September 8, 2001](#)

[Return to POW Stories](#)

[Return to Kriegies](#)



Google

Web Stalag Luft I Online

Best Books of 2011
Our Editors' Picks [▶ Learn more](#)

amazon.com

Privacy

This site created and maintained by [Mary Smith](#) and [Barbara Freer](#), daughters of Dick Williams, Jr.