

WWII: Two POW tales reconnect in Fountain Hills

By Barb Charzuk
Times Reporter

Bertrand (Sinker) Robinson and Eugene Metcalfe never met during their imprisonment in the Nazi POW Stalag 7A in Moosberg, Germany.

Years later, their paths crossed through Robinson's son, Tim, who moved to Fountain Hills and had become friends with Metcalfe.

Jack Fedor, founder of the Warbirds Unlimited Foundation, facilitated their meeting after he learned of Robinson's military experiences at Fountain Hills Barber Shop.

"He (Tim) mentioned that his father had been shot down during the war...It's like peeling an onion," said Fedor, who salutes World War II veterans by telling their stories and posting their photos to ensure that their contributions are not forgotten.

It is estimated that fewer than 600,000 World War II veterans are surviving. The "Greatest Generation" is losing approximately 350 individuals daily.

The elder Robinson was an aerial turret gunner with the 15th Air Force. The B-24 Liberator bomber had departed Italy on a mission to Hungary on March 8, 1945. He was not seriously wounded but did suffer a broken arm from bailing out. When he was taken prisoner, his para-



Bertrand (Sinker) Robinson, then living in Burlington, Iowa, at the age of 18 when he enlisted in the Army 15th Air Force in 1945.

chute had been punctured by 15 bullet holes.

His parents were notified March 26, 1945 that Robinson and his crew failed to return to the base.

He was among the 65,000 prisoners liberated April 29, 1945 by the 103rd Army liberation team. After a week in France and picking up wounded in Southampton, England, Robinson headed

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Tim Robinson

to the U.S.

Years later, a historian in his hometown of Burlington, Iowa, taped an interview with Robinson about his wartime experiences. The Warbirds Unlimited Foundation has a copy available for public viewing.

Tim never watched the video until earlier this year, some 10 years after his father's death.

It was not until then that he learned about his dad's military career. He had distinguished himself while on a bombing run over Munich. Two bombs hung up in the racks while the remainder hurtled toward their target. The bombs



Tim Robinson, left, son of Bertrand (Sinker) Robinson, and Eugene Metcalfe compare stories about World War II involving Robinson's father and Metcalfe, both POWs at Moosberg, Germany.

Times photo by Barb Charzuk

broke through their shackles and crashed through the bomb bay doors.

Robinson and two others descended into the bomb bay and attempted to fix the doors. After a half hour during which he was suspended in 18,000 feet of open air, they wired closed the doors and the plane continued its mission.

On another occasion, he was called upon to wire the bay doors closed with chicken wire.

Robinson received a Purple Heart, Presidential Citation, Air Medal and two oak leaf clusters.

In the video interview, he recalled two close calls during a 45-day trip in a boxcar filled with 16 Ameri-

can prisoners enroute to the Moosberg camp.

He regarded himself fortunate for being captured at the end of the war. Prisoners received Red Cross care packages and "had a good place to sleep."

The happiest day of his life was being liberated, he said.

"You'll never know our feelings when we saw the American flag flying," Robinson said on the video. "Veterans never talked about what they did in the war. Who would believe it?"

"They saw things that no 18- or 19-year-old person should ever have to see. They have done things that no 18- or 19-year-old

should have to experience."

Eugene Metcalfe

A paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, Eugene (Gene) Metcalfe was dropped behind German enemy lines in Op-

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eration Market Garden in Holland on Sept. 17, 1944.

He was captured the next day 45 miles behind

the enemy line. He lost his hearing when an explosion damaged his eardrum.

He spent nine months in the same POW camp where Robinson was imprisoned. For the last two years, Metcalfe has been writing a book, "Left for Dead at Nijmegen." It is scheduled to be released next month.

Metcalfe, a town resident for 30 years, was briefly employed as a Walt Disney animator after the war. He felt his creativity was stymied so he returned to college and became an art teacher and basketball, baseball and football coach.

The friendship between Metcalfe and Tim Robinson developed over a beer and relating to World War II experiences.



Robinson was interviewed about his World War II experiences in Iowa.

P3 app officially replaces Text-A-Tip

The Fountain Hills Coalition reminds residents that a smartphone app is now available to be used for anonymous tips to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

The "P3 Tips" app replaces the former Text-A-Tip program that was launched by the coalition in 2010.

The P3 application-based format allows residents to take advantage of new options yet remain anonymous.

Text-A-Tip was started by the coalition nearly a decade ago as a means for students and others to text in tips for underage drinking parties, drugs on campus and the like.

However, the program was expanded to include community residents who perhaps were more comfortable texting in tips than using the telephone.

Coalition officials are urging residents to download the P3 app and delete any references to Text-A-Tip on their phones since the service has been disconnected.

"We know of a few people who have tried using Text-A-Tip recently and received error messages," said Shelly Mowrey, the coalition's executive director. "We apologize for that, but we also want to emphasize that the new P3 app is available and working quite well."

The coalition is closely working with MCSO to develop marketing materials

that will soon be released so teens as well as other residents are up to speed on how the P3 Tips program works and how to download the app.

Users have the ability to share their name through tips provided on the app, or they may remain unidentified if desired.

The application is available on Apple and Android devices. Simply search for "P3 Tips" where you would normally download an app, and make sure it says it is developed by Anderson Software.

Captain Larry Kratzer, local captain for MCSO, said that the set-up is simple and users are guided through the whole process, including adding MCSO as the primary law enforcement agency.

Once the application is set up, users can choose

from categories before sending a tip, allowing the information to be more easily channeled to the proper authorities.

There's even a school category, allowing students to provide anonymous tips directly affecting their

"These practices make Fountain Hills a safer community for everyone."

Cpt. Larry Kratzer

school campus.

Another added feature is the ability to attach photos to tips, as well as the ability to track the progress of a tip after it has been reported.

If the authorities need to get back in touch with the person sending the tip, it will also be handled through the application.

"The coalition has had much success with Text-A-Tip over the years," Kratzer said. "We want to continue to partner with the coalition and encourage students and residents to use the new P3 app for tips."

"We follow up on all the tips. There have been convictions in the past due to anonymous tips, so this is a useful tool for both MCSO and the coalition."

"These practices make Fountain Hills a safer community for everyone."

"We appreciate the work the coalition is doing and their heavy lifting when it comes to drug and alcohol prevention among our young people."



The P3 app has replaced Text-A-Tip for making anonymous tips to MCSO.

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