



YOUR FREE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

Serving North Naples, East Naples,
Golden Gate and Downtown

WWW.NAPLESSUNTIMES.COM

10/05/2005

Capture Living History - Joseph Scaro was proud to serve

By Carl Kelly

Part nine of a continuing series. In the fall of 1942 Joseph Scaro went with a friend to the Army recruiting office in Boston, hoping to join the 82nd Airborne.

But Scaro was working in a Navy shipyard, so they wouldn't take him. His job was essential to the war effort. But, the Army, true to its famously inscrutable nature, sent him a draft notice one month later. So, the man who would have volunteered for the Army Air Corps was instead drafted into it.

Either way Scaro was happy. "I always loved airplanes. As a kid growing up, I flew model planes," he explained, swooping his hand around as if holding a toy plane, "fighting the Japs. That was before Pearl Harbor even. I love flying."

He was happy also because, like so many others of his generation, he felt there was a job to be done for his country and he wanted to do it. Asked if he would have avoided participation in WWII if possible, he replied, "Are you kidding? I was proud. I envy the boys today. I wish to hell I could fight with them."

After basic training and radio operator school, he was sent to the South Pacific. "When we got down there they said, 'Who can't swim?'" Scaro raised his hand. "We had to learn to swim at least 10 yards to go from the plane to a raft. So, I passed that ... after a while. I can swim," he chuckled, "but I have to touch bottom."

His first mission was to Wake Island on a B-24 flying out of the Marshall Islands. On the return the pilot said, "I think we're running out of gas." It looked as though Scaro's swimming ability would be tested.

"So, we threw everything overboard," he said, "machine guns, radios, everything, dumped overboard. We made it to the landing strip and we landed OK."

They had just one other close call. "Sept. 10th of '44," Scaro remembered, "we bombed Iwo Jima and on the way back we were just relaxing when all of a sudden the Zeros hit us. We didn't see the Zeros coming. We didn't have a turret in the tail. They took it out to save weight. So, the tail gunner got killed right away. So, did the photographer. It also set fire to the ammunitions in the tail. I got this scratch." He gestured across his left thigh. "I didn't know it till we got back. I didn't feel anything. It was a Band-Aid wound, a little blood, nothing much. When we got back we counted 400 holes in the plane. I got the Purple Heart for scratches."

Joseph Scaro was the radio operator and right waist gunner on a B-24. During the pre-flight routine his job was to check out the radio and his guns. "We never needed the radio, actually," he commented. "But, the guns I used."

There were usually three to six planes in formation on a mission. But, "One mission we went out on with the entire 7th Air Force," he laughed, "Twelve planes." Then, he explained, "We were fighting a holding war over there. They were doing everything in Europe. They needed everything in Europe. So, we were just hitting them here and there."



Joseph Scaro was proud to fight in WWII. He felt there was a job to be done for his country and he wanted to be doing it. He'd be proud to be fighting today, if he could.

"The Japs had 50 or so, God knows how many, small islands. Our job was to keep everything status quo. If you heard of any activity on an island, you'd go and bomb it."

They were supposed to fly 30 missions then be sent home. "But 30 missions came and they said they needed us," Scaro noted. "So, they raised it up to 35. When we got 35, they raised it up to 40. We finally made 40 missions and we came home."

"I never thought about dying," he mused. "Once in the air I felt secure. I felt invincible; nothing could touch me there. I had confidence in the guys."

He declined sharing personal memories of the crew. "A lot of memories are mine alone. A lot of good memories are here." He placed his hand over his heart. "I feel proud of those guys. I miss them all. There are only two left." The camaraderie of WWII veterans runs deep and is long lasting, something obvious in Scaro.

Joseph Scaro finished by saying he still loves airplanes. "I'm still flying them...on the computer. And, I'm beginning to learn how to fly a plane."

©Naples Sun Times 2005