



# WILL COUNTY GRASSROOTS DIVISION OF THE ILLINOIS STATE RIFLE ASSOCIATION

**NEXT MEETING - December 21st - 7:00 PM**

**Sara's Place Restaurant  
Joliet, IL (815)741-3076**



Our December meeting will include our annual "Show and Tell". If you have an interesting firearm you would like to show off, bring it along. We would also like everyone to bring their favorite Christmas cookies, candy or other finger foods to share. One of the founding members of the Will County Grassroots, Louise "Wheezy" Thompson, will be in attendance and will talk about the early days of the organization. Wheezy was the first Chairman of the WCGR and her work and effort is greatly responsible for making Will County into the strong organization it is today.

On behalf of the Will County Grassroots Committee, we would like to wish everyone a very **Merry Christmas** and a **Happy New Year!**

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## Lieutenant Colonel Vivian Lock USAF



We were honored to have Lieutenant Colonel Viv Lock, USAF Retired, as our guest speaker for November. He shared with us an array of pictures from his personal collection of wartime photos and told of the many missions he flew while serving in the United States Air Force.

Viv, a native of Kankakee, originally enlisted in the Illinois National Guard as a communications specialist. As a member of HQ Co, 129th Infantry Regime he was mobilized for service in WWII. In May of 1942, he entered the Army Air Corps Flying Sergeants training program and received his wings. He flew B24s during combat bombing missions in the Aleutian Islands with the 21st Bomb Squad, 11th AF. He later flew B29s from Guam with the 330th Bomb Group, 20th AF.

He started out in the infantry. As it turned out, being left-handed, he was not a very good shot with his bolt-action .30-.30, and did especially poor during rapid fire. He was a good shot, however, when it came to firing a pistol. In fact, he was classified as an Expert with his .45 revolver.

Viv shared with us the picture of what turned out to be his final landing of the war. This was on V-J Day while he was piloting his B29 bomber, named "The City of Kankakee". It was during this 'show of force' mission that Viv made a low-level pass over the Missouri. Ironically, this maneuver took place as the peace treaty

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was being signed. In fact, it was even recorded on Armed Forces Radio. Upon landing, Viv and his crew were informed that the war had just ended. We brought along four copies of this picture that had been previously signed by Viv back in 1945 and requested he sign them again...60 years later.

Now for a little more on the planes he flew... In his training planes, the gun sight was on the outside of the windshield. The older models of B24s that he flew did not have ball turrets; they were designed and installed on the newer models for greater and more accurate firepower. The tail turret glass was an amazing four inches thick and the bottom turret was a potential death trap. That gunner, who was required to be small in stature and sit in the fetal position for hours at a time, would

not have been able to escape through the tiny door in case of an emergency. Once, in Tucson, on a low level training mission a B24 hit a tall Saguaro cactus that ended up breaking the bombardier's leg. They named that B24 the "Cactus Clipper." During a mission from his base on the Aleutian Islands to the Japanese island of Paramushiro, only five out of ten B24s and B25s returned, due to hits by enemy aircraft. Viv was able to essentially hide his plane from the fighters by flying in the clouds and thus, survived the mission.

After being sent stateside, Viv was trained to pilot B29s and was then sent to the Pacific islands to do his bombing. These B29s were equipped with .50 caliber guns that were remote controlled. The gunner that controlled these weapons had a special device that calculated the amount of required elevation and lead-time necessary for a successful hit. These were some of the earliest computers.

B29s were the first bombers to be pressurized. To the relief of crewmembers, that meant no more freezing in temperatures of -30F to -40F at altitude and no need for oxygen masks. These improvements made for a more comfortable flight. They were not without failure, however. Viv showed us a picture of a gunner that was dangling from a blown window. The pressurization blew the window...and the gunner...right out of the plane. It took members of the crew twenty minutes to pull the helpless gunner, hanging in his harness, back into the plane.

They flew twelve aircraft in each group and varied the number of groups, depending on the mission. The B29s carried forty, five hundred pound bombs. Incendiary bombs weighed five hundred pounds and contained thirty-seven smaller bombs within. Whenever there was a bomb "hang-up", someone would have to go into the bomb bay to help with its release. Since this was a very tight space, there was not enough room for the person to wear a parachute, thus making this a very dangerous job. While stationed in the Aleutian Islands, they lost seventy-eight aircraft, but only nine of them were lost to enemy fire. Many of the casualties were caused by their worst enemy...bad weather.

Throughout his career, Viv flew fourteen missions in B24s and twenty-seven missions in B29s, for a total of forty-one missions. Some of his awards include: the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Service Stars, the American Defense Medal, an American Campaign Medal, a National Defense Medal, a WWII Victory Medal, a Good Conduct Ribbon, and a Presidential Unit Citation. Viv retired after 29 years in the military.



Thank you, Viv, for sharing your memories with us; your stories were enjoyed by one and all. Most of all, thank you for being among the thousands of men and women that have proudly served this country to ensure our freedom!

## WCGR Brings Christmas to Under-Privileged Kids

Hello and Happy Holidays to Everyone. I hope this past year has brought you much joy and happiness. As Treasurer of the Will County Grassroots Division of the ISRA, I have seen the generosity of our members and attendees of our monthly meetings. At the conclusion of every meeting we "pass the hat" and the money collected goes into an account that we have maintained since our beginning. The money we have collected over the years has gone to help fund NRA Youth camps, the NRA Foundation as well as the ISRA. In years past at Christmas time we would thank our members by having a holiday party with food and dessert.

Last year through my church, I learned about how Morning Star Mission collects presents for their "Stars of Hope". These presents go to either homeless or underprivileged children and families who would otherwise get nothing for Christmas. I took a few of the stars for myself and bought and wrapped presents that were then given to the Morning Star Mission through my church. At about this same time I was talking with some of the Board members and attendees of our monthly meetings about doing something different for Christmas. I brought up the idea of using the money we would use for a party and put it towards the "Stars of Hope" and give as many children as we could a Christmas with presents. We all agreed that it was a good idea.

Myself along with my mother and 10 month old son trekked to Wal-Mart and bought presents for fifteen children. That was a lot of fun. They each received most if not all that was on their star wish list. We wrapped somewhere around fifty presents that we then delivered to the Morning Star Mission. The thank you letter I received stated that with our help, over "400 needy families had generous amounts of food on their tables for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and gifts to open on Christmas Day".

I brought up the idea again this year at our November meeting and asked the group if it would be something we would like to do again. All were in agreement. Kim Beard and I were able to purchase eighty presents for fifteen children between the ages of five and sixteen. Each child will receive between 4 and 8 gift-wrapped presents courtesy of the generosity of our group.

I want to thank all the members who donate those few dollars a month that make it possible for us to give to these children. In the hustle and bustle of the Holidays and the rush to buy presents for our families and friends, we sometimes need to step back and remember what Christmas is about.

Lynnette Steven  
Treasurer  
Will County Grassroots

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### Political Disclaimer

The ISRA and the Will County Division of the ISRA **CAN NOT** and **WILL NOT** endorse any candidate or party. We feature speakers to allow us to learn about the positions a candidate holds about the Second Amendment, and welcome all candidates to speak to us. Only the ISRA Political Victory Fund can endorse candidates or donate to political campaigns.

## A Christmas Lesson

I remember the summer of 1972 all too well. I was 11 years old and wanted nothing as much in my short lifetime as I wanted an air rifle. Growing up on a farm, I had shot my Dad's .22 rifle a couple of times under his supervision. My friend and neighbor Joey, who lived about a mile down the road, had a couple of shotguns and we had taken those out along the railroad tracks a couple of times and shot our limit of hedge-apples. However, I really wanted an air rifle of my very own.

Living in the boonies, I did not have the opportunity to have friends from school over very often. So I was excited when my friend Mike came over one weekend and brought two of his BB guns along. We spent the afternoon shooting at any and every target we could find, including each other. I had never really been taught how to handle a gun safely, so although I knew we could get hurt, it didn't stop us from acting like fools. The farmer next door rented out part of his property to a trucking firm that steam cleaned tanker trucks, and there was always a group of semis parked down by his barn. I don't know whose idea it was to start putting empty bottles on the back of the trucks to shoot at, but when we ran out of bottles, we naturally progressed to shooting out the taillights of the trucks. We had a great time and Mike had to leave too soon.

It was the following Monday that a gentleman knocked on our front door. He had in his hands several broken taillights. I still remember the look on my mother's face when she warned me of what I had coming when my Dad got home. Suddenly, the fun of the past weekend seemed to pale when I began to realize the price I was going to pay for my stupidity.

My Dad was diplomatic about the whole situation. He closed the door before he took off his belt and gave my hind-end a tanning I'll never forget. As usual, it was his anger at me more than the belt that really hurt. That and the fact that I knew my dream of getting an air rifle for Christmas was now history. That realization took a lot of the anticipation out of the holiday season that year.

Christmas morning rolled around as it usually does that December 25th. There was the usual assortment of boxes under the tree. Nothing memorable, as I recall. It was what happened after we opened our presents that I remember. My Dad came out of the bedroom with another package. It was long and slim and it had my name on it. If you haven't guessed by now what was in that package, I'll enlighten you. It was a Daisy Powerline Model 770 pneumatic air rifle, and it was the most awesome and unexpected gift I think I have ever received. I'm sure there are still marks on that old living room floor where my jaw hit it as it dropped. I don't recall much else about that morning, but I remember going outside with my Dad, setting up a target in the field and shooting my new rifle until my fingers were numb. My Dad took the time to teach me how to handle the gun safely, how to use the safety and to be sure of where my gun was pointed at all times. He explained that although it was an air rifle, it was a powerful and potentially deadly weapon and must be treated with respect.

I'm sure there are some people out there that would be appalled by my father's actions. Why would you give a then 12-year-old a rifle after he had demonstrated his irresponsibility just months before? At the time, of course, I was simply thrilled. But with years of experience as a father and the hindsight that these gray hairs bring, I

am even more amazed at the intelligence and foresight that went into that gift. That rifle began my life-long love affair with firearms, and was my pride and joy for many, many years. Countless hours were spent in the field with the Daisy, and numerous bullfrogs, rabbits and the occasional walnut witnessed its power and my accuracy. I finally wore that gun out, but still to this day it sits in my closet. Though I no longer shoot it, the memories and lessons it represents make it one of the most valuable guns in my collection. As Christmas season approaches once again, (I hear it's on December 25th again this year), I wonder if I will ever have the opportunity to impress on my children a lesson with the impact and lasting effects that my Father did for me. Thanks Dad!

Dave Beard

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## Unintended Consequences

Unintended Consequences is an incredible novel that all gun owners, supporters of the Second Amendment and freedom lovers will thoroughly enjoy. This is a book you will not be able to put down; even the acknowledgements and the foreword are fascinating.

The first part of the book is a history of how gun laws came about in the United States. Written from the perspective of people during that time, it is very informative. I learned a lot about gun laws that I did not know. Do you think the 1968 Gun Control Act was the beginning of restrictive gun laws in the United States? You will learn from reading this book that government was meddling with our freedoms much earlier than that.

The second part of the book takes place in modern-day America. Federal assaults on the gun culture finally drive law-abiding citizens across the country to begin taking back their constitutional rights through an unorganized and disconnected "getting even and teaching them a lesson" solution.

This weighty (900 pages) novel is packed with very well researched descriptions of guns and ammunition. The episodes of violence and sex are quite graphic at times, and therefore are not suitable for children and the sensitive. It centers around the main character, Henry Bowman, just one of the millions of people who comprise America's "gun culture". Henry is alone at a friend's house one night. He uses his shooting skills to thwart an armed break-in only to discover that the assault was not a burglary but a BATF raid. With the memories of the Ruby Ridge killings and Waco still fresh in his memory, he realizes he has just given himself a death sentence. Despite the odds, Henry has no intention of giving in. It is inspiring how he and the other heroic characters turn the world of the evil gun-grabbers upside down.

The author, John Ross, is a certified personal protection instructor. He has written a book that assesses the effect of concealed-carry laws on violent crime and has authored several firearm-related technical articles for Precision Shooting magazine and Machine Gun News. He fires upwards of 20,000 rounds of ammunition per year and is, by his own admission, a member of the gun culture.

Unintended Consequences is available from the Liberty Book Shop at (702) 656-3285 and [www.LibertyBookShop.us](http://www.LibertyBookShop.us) Other sources would be the publisher, Accurate Press, at (800) 374-4049 and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Linda Ward

# BRAVE HEARTS

By Ralph Kinney Bennet

*Editor's note: Can Do Notes does not usually print or reprint anecdotes describing events in other groups. This one following, from the 10th Bomb Group, seems to merit being an exception.*

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, of the 8th Air Force's 100th Bomb Group, was flying his B-17G Flying Fortress bomber on a raid over Hamburg. His formation had braved heavy flak to drop their bombs, then turned 180 degrees to head out over the North Sea. They had finally turned northwest, headed back to England, when they were jumped by German fighters at 22,000 feet. The Messerschmitt Me-109s pressed their attack so closely that Capt. Rojohn could see the faces of the German pilots.

He and other pilots fought to remain in formation so they could use each other's guns to defend the group. Rojohn saw a B-17 ahead of him burst into flames and slide sickeningly toward the Earth. He gunned his ship forward to fill in the gap. He felt a huge impact. The big bomber shuddered, felt suddenly very heavy and began losing altitude. Rojohn grasped almost immediately that he had collided with another plane. A B-17 below him, piloted by Lt. William G. McNab, had slammed the top of its fuselage into the bottom of Rojohn's. The top turret gun of McNab's plane was now locked in the belly of Rojohn's plane and the ball turret in the belly of Rojohn's had smashed through the top of McNab's. The two bombers were almost perfectly aligned - the tail of the lower plane was slightly to the left of Rojohn's tailpiece. They were stuck together, as a crewman later recalled, "like mating dragon flies."

No one will ever know exactly how it happened. Perhaps both pilots had moved instinctively to fill the same gap in formation. Perhaps McNab's plane hit an air pocket. Three of the engines on the bottom plane were still running, as were all four of Rojohn's. The fourth engine on the lower bomber was on fire and the flames were spreading to the rest of the aircraft. The two were losing altitude quickly. Rojohn tried several times to gun his engines and break free of the other plane, but the two were inextricably locked together. Fearing a fire, Rojohn cut his engines and rang the bailout bell. If his crew had any chance of parachuting, he had to keep the plane under control somehow. The ball turret, hanging below the belly of the B-17, was considered by many to be a death trap - the worst station on the bomber. In this case, both ball turrets figured in a swift and terrible drama of life and death. Staff Sgt. Edward L. Woodall Jr., in the ball turret of the lower bomber, had felt the impact of the collision above him and saw shards of metal drop past him. Worse, he realized both electrical and hydraulic power was gone. Remembering escape drills, he grabbed the handcrank, released the clutch and cranked the turret and its guns until they were straight down, then turned and climbed out the back of the turret up into the fuselage.

Once inside the plane's belly, Woodall saw a chilling sight - the ball turret of the other bomber protruding through the top of the fuselage. In that turret, hopelessly trapped, was Staff Sgt. Joseph Russo. Several crew members on Rojohn's plane tried frantically to crank Russo's turret around so he could escape. But, jammed into the fuselage of the lower plane, the turret would not budge. Aware of his plight, but possibly unaware that his voice was going out over the intercom of his plane, Sgt. Russo began reciting his Hail Marys.

Up in the cockpit, Capt. Rojohn and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. William G. Leek Jr., had propped their feet against the instrument panel so they could pull back on their controls with all their strength, trying to prevent their plane from going into a spinning dive that would prevent the crew from jumping out. Capt. Rojohn motioned left and

the two managed to wheel the grotesque collision born hybrid of a plane back toward the German coast. Leek felt like he was intruding on Sgt. Russo as his prayers crackled over the radio, so he pulled off his flying helmet with its earphones. Rojohn, immediately grasping that crew could not exit from the bottom of his plane, ordered his top turret gunner and his radio operator, Tech Sgts. Orvill Elkin and Edward G. Neuhaus, to make their way to the back of the fuselage and out the waist door on the left behind the wing. Then he got his navigator 2nd Lt. Robert Washington, and his bombardier, Sgt. James Shirley, to follow them. As Rojohn and Leek somehow held the plane steady, these four men, as well as waist gunner Sgt. Roy Little and tail gunner Staff Sgt. Francis Chase, were able to bail out.

Now the plane locked below them was aflame. Fire poured over Rojohn's left wing. He could feel the heat from the plane below and hear the sound of .50-caliber machinegun ammunition cooking off in the flames. Capt. Rojohn ordered Lt. Leek to bailout. Leek knew that without him helping keep the controls back, the plane would drop in a flaming spiral and the centrifugal force would prevent Rojohn from bailing. He refused the order.

Meanwhile, German soldiers and civilians on the ground that afternoon looked up in wonder. Some of them thought they were seeing a new Allied secret weapon - a strange eight-engined double bomber. But anti-aircraft gunners on the North Sea coastal island of Wangerooge had seen the collision. A German battery captain wrote in his logbook at 12:47 p.m.: "Two fortresses collided in a formation in the NE. The planes flew hooked together and flew 20 miles south. The two planes were unable to fight anymore. The crash could be awaited so I stopped the firing at these two planes."

Suspended in his parachute in the old December sky, Bob Washington watched with deadly fascination as the mated bombers, trailing black smoke, fell to Earth about three miles away, their downward trip ending in an ugly boiling blossom of fire.

In the cockpit Rojohn and Leek held grimly to the controls trying to ride a falling rock. Leek tersely recalled "The ground came up faster and faster. Praying was allowed. We gave it one last effort and slammed into the ground." The McNab plane on the bottom exploded, vaulting the other B-17 upward and forward. It hit the ground and slid along until its left wing slammed through a wooden building and the smoldering mass of aluminum came to a stop. Rojohn and Leek were still in their cockpit. The nose of the plane was relatively intact, but everything from the B-17's massive wings back was destroyed. They looked at each other incredulously. Neither was badly injured. Movies have nothing on reality. Still perhaps in shock, Leek crawled out through a huge hole behind the cockpit, felt for the familiar pack in his uniform pocket and pulled out a cigarette. He placed it in his mouth and was about to light it. Then he noticed a young German soldier pointing a rifle at him. The soldier looked scared and annoyed. He grabbed the cigarette out of Leek's mouth and pointed down to the gasoline pouring out over the wing from a ruptured fuel tank.

Two of the six men who parachuted from Rojohn's plane did not survive the jump. But the other four and, amazingly, four men from the other bomber, including ball turret gunner Woodall, survived. All were taken prisoner. Several of them were interrogated at length by the Germans until they were satisfied that what had crashed was not a new American secret weapon.

Rojohn, typically, didn't talk much about his Distinguished Flying Cross. Of Leek, he said, "In all fairness to my co-pilot, he's the reason I'm alive today." Like so many veterans, Rojohn got unsentimentally back to life after the war, marrying and raising a son and daughter. For many years, though, he tried to link back up with Leek, going through government records to try to track him down. It

took him 40 years, but in 1986, he found the number of Leek's mother, in Washington state. Yes, her son Bill was visiting from California. Would Rojohn like to speak with him? Two old men on a phone line, trying to pick up some familiar timbre of youth in the voice of each other. One can imagine that first conversation between the two men who had shared that wile ride in the cockpit of a B-17.

A year later, the two were re-united at a reunion of the 100th Bomb Group in Long Beach, California. Bill Leek died the following year. Glenn Rojohn was the last survivor of the remarkable piggyback flight. He was like thousands upon thousands of men - soda jerks and lumberjacks, teachers and dentists, students and lawyers, service

station attendants and store clerks and farm boys - who in the prime of their lives went to war in World War II. They sometimes did incredible things, endured awful things, and for the most part, most of them pretty much kept it to themselves and just faded back into the fabric of civilian life.

Capt. Glenn Rojohn, AAF, died last Saturday after a long siege of ill-ness. But he apparently faced that final battle with the same grim aplomb he displayed that remarkable day over Germany so long ago. Let us be thankful for such men.

Ralph Kinney Bennett is a contributing editor to TechCentralStation.com.

*contributed by Doug Mayhall*

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## Calendar of Events

- Jan 14 Winter Wars Matches II ISRA Range, Bonfield, IL *Claude Heale 815-553-0591*  
Jan 14 Morris Gun Show - Morris VFW 815 634-8508  
Jan 15 Kane County Gun Show St. Charles, IL *www.kanecountyfair.com/*  
Feb 5 Wheaton Gun Show - Wheaton, IL *www.dupagecountyfair.org/*  
Mar 19 Three Rivers Friends of NRA Banquet - Joliet, IL *www.threeriversfnra.com/*

*Please use the above contact information to confirm events as dates may change without notice*

*Please contact Secretary, Doug Mayhall, or the ISRA office if you would like to help out at any of the ISRA events.*

*E-mail [willcounty@isra.org](mailto:willcounty@isra.org) if you have any events you would like included in next month's newsletter.*

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## Don't Feel Good About Gun Buy-Backs

Copy of Letter to the Editor sent to Chicago Tribune and SunTimes

This week end local police departments in Lake County, Illinois, will be buying guns with "no questions asked" and without requiring a Firearm Owner's Identification card. These gun buy-back programs have been going on for years and I am familiar with them because I was a prosecutor for 29 years. Criminals with firearms that have been used in crimes, including some murders, use these buy-back programs as a sure fire, safe way of getting rid of the evidence. The criminal gets paid and the police destroy the very evidence that can send the criminal to prison.

These "feel good" gun buy-back programs do not help the public. Professor John Lott, while at the University of Chicago, researched firearms, laws, and crime rate data for all 3,054 counties in the United States during the 18 years from 1977 to 1994. Professor Lott found that the states "with the largest increases in gun ownership also have the largest drops in violent crimes." He found that taking firearms away from the public creates situations in which the good guys cannot defend themselves from the bad ones. His research showed reduced gun ownership made law-abiding citizens more vulnerable to crime. Overwhelmingly, similar academic studies of safe storage and gun lock laws have found no evidence that they reduce the total number firearm deaths.

Don't feel good about giving money to criminals, destroying evidence, violating Illinois criminal codes, and helping to increase violent crime rates.

Edward Ronkowski

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