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Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine

WWII Bomber Pilot Recalls Life in a B-17 Cockpit

Editor's Note: Paul G. Anderson, Jr. is a resident of Santa Rosa, Calif. A State Farm insurance agent in Santa Rosa, his office is at 492 Mendocino Ave.

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--What was it like to pilot a B-17 Flying Fortress on 46 bombing missions over Europe in World War II? Just ask Paul G. Anderson, Jr.

Anderson--a bomber commander and a squadron and group leader--began navigating Europe's wartime skies in 1943, recalling: "You always got hit somewhere. Flak shells exploded into fragments, and the smoke was so thick you could get out and walk on it. If it hit in the wrong place, that's it. Pilots and co-pilots wore flak suits like an umpire behind home plate--and that suit saved my life once." Anderson also wore a metal helmet--like an infantryman--for protection.

Anderson's wartime experiences are recounted in the Fall, 1995, edition of *Illinois Wesleyan University Magazine* in an article, "A Change in Plans: IWU and the War," marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. The article, written by Bob Aaron, IWU's director of public relations, is attached to this news release.

Anderson also remembers running into Clark Gable, the "King of Hollywood," at an Officers Club. Gable was assigned to Anderson's unit as a waist gunner.

Anderson describes what it was like piloting a bomber on missions over prime targets like Berlin, Bremen, Essen, Cologne, Schweinfurt, and elsewhere. He also recalls what it was like limping back to England, trying to keep a shot-up bomber, low on gas, in the air over the English Channel.

Anderson, a former IWU trustee, was a business student at the university in 1935-36.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls 1,860 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. The university's endowment is valued at more than \$100 million. A \$25 million Center for Natural Science Learning and Research opened Aug. 28. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a

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"Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 164 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition. *101 of the Best Values in America's Colleges and Universities* calls IWU "undoubtedly one of the finest small colleges in the country," adding, "Illinois Wesleyan has surged to national prominence on the basis of its reputation as a school with a rock-solid academic program."