

PETE BOGNER
BY TONY BIGGIO

Pete Bogner was born and raised in and graduated from high school in Wooster, Ohio. He went to King College in Bristol, Tennessee and there, he learned to fly airplanes. Then, the exciting part of his life began. He left King College in his junior year and joined the Army Air Corps of the 15th Army.

Pete became a Captain and the pilot of a ten man B-24 Bomber. Pete and his crew flew a new B-24 across the Atlantic with no radio, a faulty oxygen delivery system, and with no advance weather prediction. They hedgehopped from Newfoundland to the Azores off of Africa, to Marrakech, Morocco, to Tunis and finally to Italy. The flight across the Atlantic seemed to be in the center of a horrendous storm. Pete and his crew finally arrived on New Years' Eve in Chesignola, northern Italy and remained there until the European war was over on May 7, 1945. He still keeps in contact with some of his original crewmates.

While in Italy, Pete visited his older brother, Dick. Dick had been wounded in infantry combat near the Brenner Pass. Richard Boger, or Dick, was the father of present Rotary members Don and Ted Boger. Pete and Dick decided that, if they survived the war, they would return to Wooster and go into business with their father and thus started Theodore Bogner and Sons. This successful commercial construction business is now in its fourth generation. Pete officially retired in 1988.

All of the World War II veterans have stories. This story is about the woman he loved and married. Pete is partial to redheads and from a blind date; he met a co-ed at the College of Wooster. We knew her as "Bunny". They had dated during Pete's training. Finally, the story is something like this: "I have a four day leave coming up. I will be leaving Smyrna, Tennessee and I have a few days to reach El Paso, Texas. If I come through Wooster, will you marry me?" Bunny replied, "Hold the phone, let me talk to my mother." There was a pause, then Bunny returned, "Yes."

Bunny passed away nine years ago, but they were married for 53 years. They have two children, Barb and Bob and six grandchildren. Bob is still active in the family business.

Pete has been in the Wooster Rotary Club for 55 years. Thirty-four years ago he was President. Pete's sense of humor and timing was of the "Saturday Night Live" quality. One member introduced his guest as Raymond Heine, an Assistant Pastor at one of the local churches. Pete greeted and recognized the guest and to Reverend Heine he said, "I can not think of a better name for a backup minister."

Another memorable incident involved a group study exchange from Japan. The group leader addressed the club with is better command of the English language and introduced the four man team. They in turn recited their canned memorized speech. They looked blankly at the club and the club looked blankly at them. And then President Pete from the podium gazed at the club a little longer than usual, from one end of the room to the other. He spoke to the group leader "You know Dr., you're right, they all do look alike."

Pete Bogner has been a vital community leader for 85 years. He always manages to make people smile and to feel good about themselves. I present Pete Bogner.