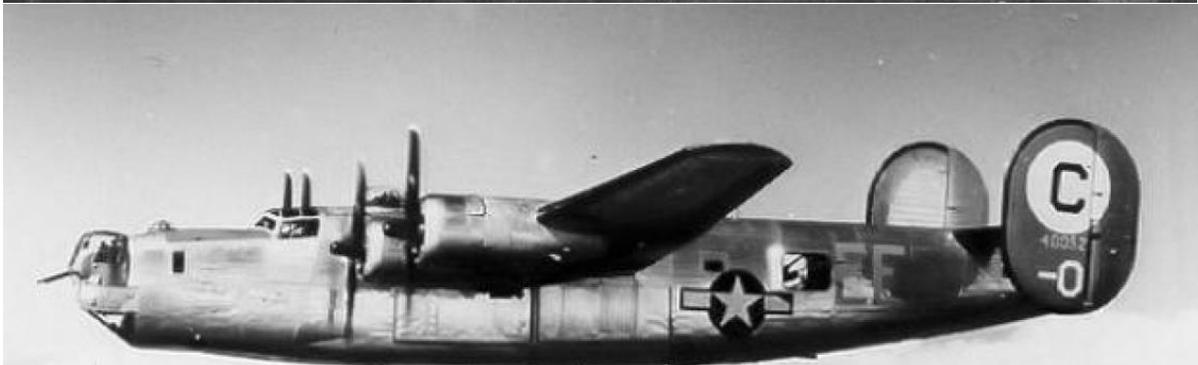


Our speaker for the October 2019 Luncheon is, like most of us, a retiree, but for most of us the similarity ends there. It could be his age, as he will celebrate his 97th birthday in September, which makes him older than most of us. It could be his volunteer work as a docent at the Lyon Air Museum, as only a few of us do that. It could be his service as a pilot in WWII, a distinction that few of us hold.



Bob Ruiz is a native Californian, was born in San Diego in 1922, and grew up in Pacific Beach. His father owned a

nursery, and by age 18 Ruiz was supervising men who were older than he was.

By the time war broke out on Dec. 7, 1941, Ruiz had graduated from La Jolla High School and registered for the draft. In 1942, Ruiz applied for the aviation cadet program and was accepted.

He had primary training in Santa Maria and advanced training in Douglas, Ariz. where he learned how to fly twin-engine planes and received his wings as second lieutenant. In Pueblo, Colorado he learned how to fly the B-24 Liberator, the four-engine airplane he would eventually command while stationed in England.

The goal for each mission was pretty straight-forward: drop bombs and hamper the war effort on the German side. During one of those missions, Ruiz's plane was hit and lost one engine and the brakes. Before he got to the English coast, he lost another engine. Ruiz managed to return to base and land the plane safely, saving the lives of his crew members and his own. He was later awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions.

After four years in the service, Ruiz opted for college instead of re-enlistment and attended San Diego State. A couple of years later he became shareholder of Packaging Corporation of America. In 1966 he married his wife Gloria, who worked at the business. They have one son and two daughters.

Ruiz, who lives in south Orange County, is long retired but still keeps active as a volunteer docent and speaker for groups like ours.