

WWII vet shares experience as 'Flying Tiger'

INTERVIEWED BY CHINESE FILM CREW FOR A DOCUMENTARY

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He never really thought of himself as a hero -- just a guy helping a country in a difficult time.



That is not how he is remembered in China.

It's not his name -- Frank Losonsky -- that is so well known there more than 60 years later, but that of the organization of which he was a member. That is the American Volunteer Group known as "The Flying Tigers."

The group consisting of three fighter squadrons -- 300 men -- operated with the Chinese Air Force in 1941 and 1942 defending the country against the Japanese and was responsible for bringing down, Losonsky said, 283 Japanese airplanes.

"We did what we went there to do," Losonsky said.

There was a special group in Columbus Friday to hear Losonsky describe his role.

Journalists from China Central Television are in America recording interviews with veterans who served in China during World War II. CCTV has already interviewed more than 200 people about their experiences as soldiers and civilians during the Japanese invasion. The interviews are part of CCTV's Oral History Project to be broadcast in China and archived in research libraries.

These men should be remembered

Simone Wright is Chinese. Her late husband, Peter Wright, was a comrade of Losonsky. She was with the crew as an interpreter.

"The program," Wright said, "will commemorate the friendship of the Chinese and American people during the most turbulent time in Chinese history. It will be similar to the type of documentaries we see here on the History or Discovery channels."

"These brave men should always be remembered," said Zhang Jun, crew leader. Others here were Qi Shaohua and Liu Xuefeng.

"It was tough operating in the jungle," said the 87-year-old Losonsky, whose family owns three local restaurants. The walls of one, Tavern Off Broadway, has lithographs of World War II airplanes. "Every day was interesting."

Losonsky: 'It was an exciting time'

Though he could fly, Losonsky, who began in the U.S. Army Air Corps, served as a mechanic.

"We were often short on the materials needed," he said. He often used parts from wrecked aircraft.

Losonsky, a Detroit native who spent his teen years during the Depression on a farm in Ashley, Mich., learned about aircraft engines at the Aeronautical University in Chicago. It was while stationed in West Palm Beach, Fla., that he was approached by a representative of the U.S. government recruiting for the Chinese to help the cause. He signed up.

Losonsky arrived in China by boat. "I wasn't sure where we were going or what to expect," he said. Destroyers escorted his vessel.

After the war, he continued working with airplanes in places such as India and the Philippines.

"It was an exciting time," said Losonsky, one of the youngest in the group. "I think it's great that after all of these years the Chinese people are still interested in this part of this history. I'm glad I'm still around to help them."

