Decorated Lafayette **WWII Veteran Lives** Life to the Fullest

www.lamorindaweekly.com

By Lou Fancher



Dan Baker with a model of the Curtiss SB-2C Helldiver aircraft. Photo A. Scheck

an Baker is a man of action. money: I wasn't," he says. Ask the 94-year-old former still-actively practicing attorney about his late wife, Arlene, who passed away in 2012, he springs out of a chair in his Lafayette home's sunroom and races down a hallway.

Returning with a black-andwhite photo of his wife of 64 years, he spouts poetic and practical reasons for marrying her within three ing down a Japanese fighter plane. months of their first meeting. "She was charming, inside and outside. Look at her: she was beauty itself," and "She was working and making

Then, like the Grumman F6F World War II Navy fighter pilot and Hellcat he flew long ago in combat, a subsequent inquiry about WWII battles sends him running again.

> Returning, he brings medals, mounted in a display box: a Navy Cross, for bombing the Japanese battleship Nagato; the Distinguished Flying Cross, for destroying a second enemy ship; an Air Medal, for shoot-

Baker grew up in San Francisco and says he was "a party boy," a kid who started as an honor student and "went downhill" just gradually enough to still graduate from college. A heart murmur kept him out of the Army, but when the country started to re-examine even legitimate outliers like Baker, he joined the Navy on May 10, 1942. "Nobody had a choice," he says. "Everybody had the idea they wanted to go because there was a war going on."

After training on a two-winged Sterman airplane at Navy Preliminary Flight School in Livermore, Baker was sent to Florida. Trained on combat planes, he became an instructor and scouted the Atlantic coast, looking for German submarines. After 10 months, he was assigned to Air Group 18 and found himself on the 900-footlong U.S.S. Intrepid, an aircraft carrier that is now the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum located at Pier 86 on the west side of Manhattan.

But in October of 1944, the Intrepid was a launch pad for the Battle of Leyte Gulf, arguably the largest battle in naval history. "We took down the two largest battleships ever built in Japan, the Yamato and Musashi," Baker says. Japan used all the steel the country produced to build and arm the two signature battleships, distinguished by their size and then-recordsetting 18.1 inch guns. "Our group was responsible for sinking the Musashi," Baker says.

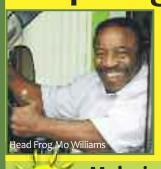
Although unafraid to assert the importance of the U.S. military victories, Baker isn't sentimental about his role. "I was trained to do one thing: fly a plane with guns and bombs and go after the targets," he says. "They gave you an award for what you did. When I returned, they thought I was a hero. I thought I'd accomplished the things I was trained to do, and did it successfully."

... continued on page B4



LAMORINDA

LeapFrog Plumbing



Got gas? Many people think plumbers deal only with water and sewage. Not true! We install and repair all types of gas lines and fixtures too.

Mo's sizzling summer specials...

- Outdoor kitchens New gas lines for cooktops and dryers
- Fire pits & patio heaters
- Pool heaters & hot tubs Natural gas barbecues

We're poly-pipe certified (used by PG&E – better than iron)



\$200 off Tankless water heater

LeapFrog Loot

\$50 off

Any plumbing job*

LeapFrog Loot

\$100 off

Gas line installation

over \$600*

LeapFrog Loot

installation* 1 coupon per service, exp. 7/31/14

We Hop To It! Family-owned and serving Lamorinda since 1993

green solutions!

377-6600

www.LeapFrogPlumbing.com







DANIEL W. HAKER Ensign, USNR San Francisco, Calif.

Samira

Samira Davi is a Nurse Liaison foi ManorCare Health Services in Walnut Creek. Samira has over 10 years of experience working in health care in Contra Costa County, which has gained her a wide view of what is important to the health care consumer. She will be posting common questions and comments in each issue of the Lamorinda Weekly. You are welcome to contact Samira directly at 925.270.8766

Counseling

e at ManorCare recommend that patients who are planning a surgery visit a few post- acute rehab centers prior to their hospitalization. By making these pre-surgery visits, stress and anxiety can be greatly reduced. Now you can focus solely on your recovery.

We would be pleased for you to call one of our centers and schedule a tour or to ask any questions that you may have. For

patients who are unable to visit or would prefer "pre-op counseling" in the physician's office at the time of an appointment – we are happy to do that as well. We are happy to meet with you in either location and explain what to expect from a post-acute rehab center. Any patient that the physician feels would benefit from post-acute rehabilitation is appropriate for this service. ManorCare staff will also investigate your insurance coverage on your behalf.

Our post-acute care is designed to improve your transition back to the community. After surgery, illness or injury, you want to get back to your life as quickly as possible. Our posthospital centers are your best way home after a hospital stay. We offer complex medical and rehabilitation services delivered by a team of highly skilled professionals. Our entire team focuses on getting you home. Evidence of our post-acute rehabilitation success is shown in our outcomes. Our clinical teams have demonstrated track records of success and a proven commitment to clinical excellence.

You will get to decide where you rehabilitate. We encourage you visit, to ask a lot of questions, to do your research, and to ask your physicians for their opinion. We are here to help, so please feel free to ask any member of our team for assistance at any time.

Samira Davi, ManorCare, Nurse Liaison 925-270-8766 Melissa Katz, ManorCare Rossmoor Parkway 925-975-5000 Imelda Martinez, ManorCare Tice Valley, 926-906-0200

> For more information please visit www.manorcare.com. For a short video visit us on YouTube: www.youtube.com/hcrmanorcare



ManorCare Walnut Creek 1226 Rossmoor Parkway Walnut Creek, CA 94595, 925.975.5000 Walnutcreek@manorcare.com

ManorCare Tice Valley 1975 Tice Valley Blvd Walnut Creek, CA 94595, 925.906.0200 ticevalley@manorcare.com

Theater View Veterinary Clinic



Theater View Veterinary Clinic is a brand new facility owned by "Dr. Laurie" Langford who has been caring for animals in Orinda for 15 years.



"Dr. Laurie" Langford

Phone: (925) 317-3187 Fax: (925) 334-7017 Email: tvvc@theaterviewvetclinic.com

www.theaterviewvetclinic.com 1 Bates Blvd., Suite 200, Orinda