

GV vet once again honors firefighters

Says he'll never forget events on 9/11

By Regina Ford
Green Valley News

GREEN VALLEY—Retired Lt. Col. Frank Sartanowicz will celebrate his 82nd birthday on Sept. 11. He won't be blowing out the candles on his own cake, though.

Instead, Sartanowicz, a former P-61 Black Widow night fighter pilot in WWII and intelligence officer in Korea, wants to thank once again the local firefighters and paramedics for all they do for the community, and to remember the 343 firefighters who perished in the World Trade Center disaster Sept. 11, 2001.

Sartanowicz is hoping to use his birthday to organize and challenge Elks Lodges around the country to serve dinners to community fire houses as a way to honor their service and remember those firefighters who lost their lives on 9/11.

Sartanowicz and his group of volunteers will be hosting a 9/11 Firefighters' Memorial Dinner, Sunday, Sept. 11, at the Green Valley Elks Lodge #2592, 2951 S. Camino Mercado.

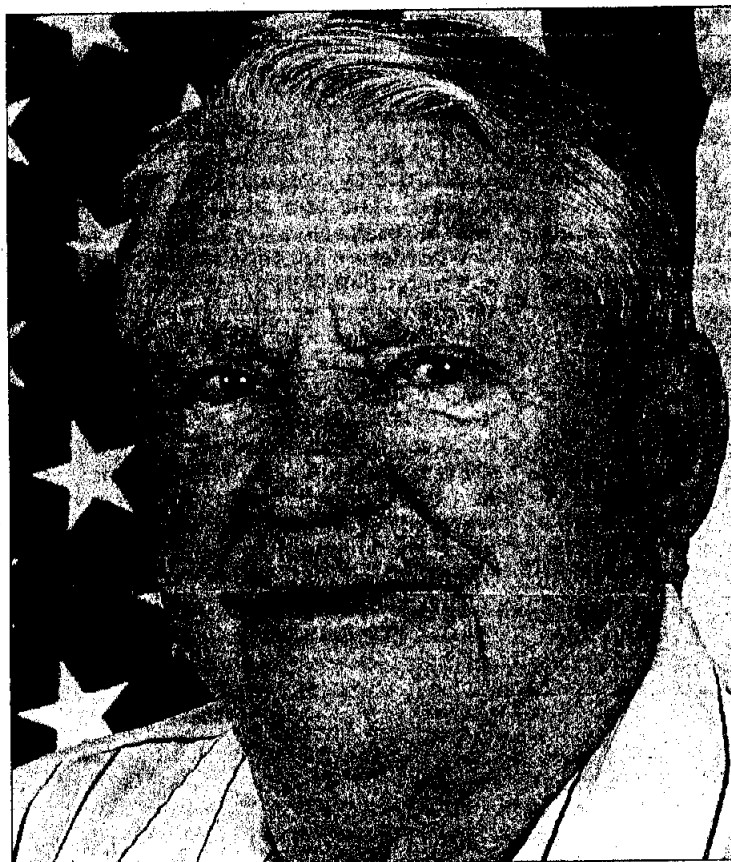
The social hour starts at 4:30 p.m. featuring a no-host bar followed by dinner at 5:30 p.m. with a no-host wine cart. The featured entree is roast turkey with all the trimmings and dessert prepared by the Elks' Chef Fred Hall.

Musical entertainment for the event is provided by the Desert Doo-Wop Band and there will be door prizes for some lucky attendees.

The 9/11 Firefighters' Memorial Dinner is open to the public. Tickets are \$10 and are available by calling Sartanowicz at 625-5913. Only 100 tickets will be sold for this event, so Sartanowicz suggests buying them early before they're all gone.

Meals for firefighters

To coincide with the dinner at the Elks Lodge, several Elks' volunteer groups will be preparing and serving turkey meals to all three fire stations in the Green Valley Fire District, as well as a dinner for the crews of the Rural/Metro Fire Department in Sahuarita and another dinner for the Tubac Fire District.



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RETIRED LT. COL. Frank Sartanowicz and his group will be hosting a 9/11 Firefighters' Memorial Dinner at the Green Valley Elks Lodge Sunday, Sept. 11.

"We want people to be able to come together as a community and honor out firefighters and paramedics for all they do," Sartanowicz said.

"Those attending will be able to meet some of our firefighter heroes and their families as well."

Sartanowicz and his wife Betty Jane came up with the idea of honoring firefighters last year and on his 81st birthday, the couple prepared and served not only Frank's "famous smoked turkeys," but all the trimmings that make a real feast — yams, Boston baked beans and Betty Jane's pies for dessert.

Last year's dinner was cooked and served at local Green Valley Fire District Station 153 and in Frank's words, "was a great success and very rewarding for all who participated."

When the couple realized last year that there were more fire stations in the Green Valley area and the surrounding communities, Frank approached the Green Valley Elks Lodge #2592, where he is a member, for help. As a result, many people

joined the Sartanowiczs and all five area fire stations enjoyed a smoked turkey dinner.

Across the country

It is Frank's goal to someday have Elks' Lodges across the nation hosting 9/11 Firefighters' Memorial Dinners. He has made up brochures explaining the dinners and how to organize them, and has sent them to more than 40 Elks' Lodges in Arizona and several out-of-state.

The retired lieutenant colonel flew the highly classified P-61, an aircraft designed by Northrop as a night fighter interceptor of enemy aircraft.

As the youngest pilot in the 425th Squadron in Western Europe at age 19, Sartanowicz flew 65 missions for more than a year, specializing in the neutralization of enemy train and convoy movements overnight, as well as stalking the infamous German V1 rockets.

He received the Air Medal with eight leaf clusters and a Bronze Star in Korea.

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