



# THE EXAMINER

2019 WINNER  
NATIONAL  
NEWSPAPER  
ASSOCIATION

GENERAL EXCELLENCE,  
INVESTIGATIVE/IN-DEPTH COVERAGE,  
BREAKING NEWS, SPORTS FEATURE



THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS

# WORLD AT WAR



## Nederland teen shot down over Hungary survives captivity

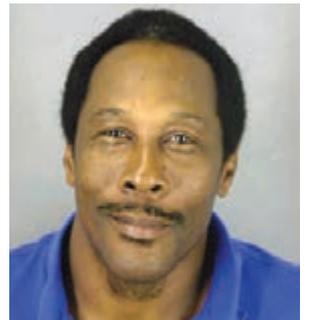
### EDITORIAL



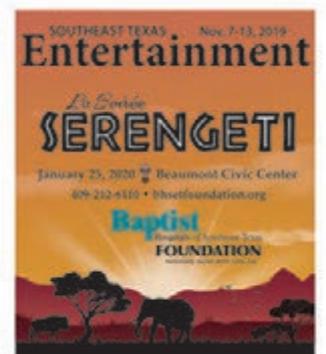
### WE CANT ALLOW BACKROOM DEALS AT DRAINAGE DISTRICT

Page 13

### WEEKEND JAIL TIME



### FORMER BISD CONTRACTOR FACES PUNISHMENT



neches  
FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

# 1.9%<sup>APR</sup> ON HOLIDAY! PURCHASES



\*With approved credit. Some restrictions apply. All payments will apply to interest, fees, and promotional balances first. Late payments may cause your APR to revert back to the standard purchase rate prior to the end of the promotional period. Cash advances and balance transfers are excluded from the promotional rate. Your APR will revert back to the standard purchase rate following the end of your credit card agreement at the end of the promotional period. Not all credit unions will qualify for this rate.

# 'Good books' offer comfort to teenage prisoner of war

By Jennifer Johnson  
Managing Editor

Louis Rayford Guzardo was still a teenager when the "Lucky 13" bombardment plane he tail-gunned for was shot down over Hungary in July 1944. And, as was all too common during his time fighting in World War II, it wasn't the first time Guzardo took on hostile fire.

"Some missions didn't have any trouble at all – not too often, though," Guzardo said.

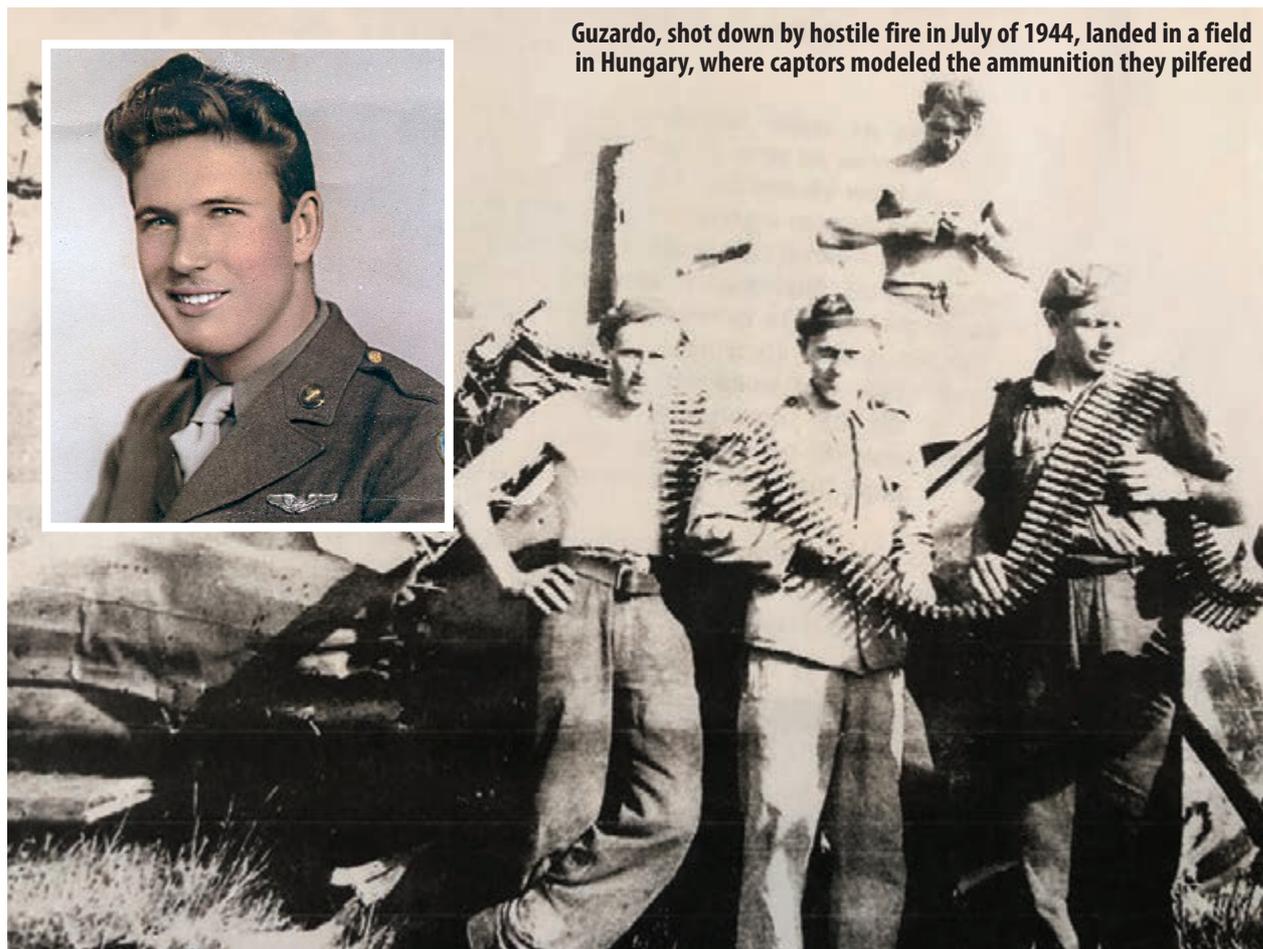
According to Guzardo's calculations, upwards of 139 fighter planes were shot down during the first year he had been in commission. At just 18 years old, Guzardo was drafted into the Army and was placed in the Air Corps squad where he would spend the next several years.

Some of the planes and crews were recovered; many were not. Solo missions enhanced the likelihood that, should the worst occur, no help would be nearby.

"We never sent two together," Guzardo recalls. "They always only sent one."

Once, Guzardo said, "We got a shot up in France. We spent the next week trying to find a new engine." But Guzardo's downed planes didn't always fall in such friendly territory.

"I never got off a single shot," Guzardo recalls of the day his crew was shot down over Hungary. Pilot Edward Murphy, his report of the event contained in Lyle McCarty's "Coffee Tower," said the mission started off well enough.



Guzardo, shot down by hostile fire in July of 1944, landed in a field in Hungary, where captors modeled the ammunition they pilfered

Guzardo's plane wreckage



"We were approaching the target area, and we heard some crews ahead break radio silence with reports of heavy flak," Murphy recalled, indicating such disturbances were routinely the case. "No cause for panic – we always got heavy flak over the big targets."

Suddenly, an explosion of flak shell burst below the plane, soaking ball turret gunner George Treut in gasoline.

"I'm getting out of here," Murphy said he heard Treut say. In less than 20 minutes, fuel was gone in one of the plane's engines and the crew knew they'd be lucky to make it out of enemy territory before going down.

"Now, we were faced with either a bailout or a belly landing in the farming area of Southwest Hungary, and a vote was unanimous for belly landing," Murphy recounted. At the time, he said, it "seemed like our best option."

Even if it was the best option, landing in a Hun-

garian field behind enemy lines was far from idyllic.

"It took the Hungarian peasants (about 30 of them), both men and women, a few minutes to round us up and then discuss what to do with us," Treut expanded on Murphy's recitation. "The men were pointing to a suitable tree for hanging, but the women were saying 'no,' and we were all relieved when three soldiers appeared – one German and two Hungarians."

Guzardo, Treut, Murphy and the seven other men in their crew were marched to what looked like a prison to Treut and locked in a dungeon with other prisoners who appeared to have been badly burned before, or during, their capture.

"Our days of flying missions were over and our introduction to fleas and ersatz everything had begun," Treut remembered.

At the POW (Prisoner of War) camp, the men

See GOOD on page 6A

**TEXAS Super Lawyers**  
SINCE 2008

**HABLAMOS ESPAÑOL**

TOP VERDICT  
8 YEARS IN A ROW



**CLAY DUGAS**  
BOARD CERTIFIED PERSONAL INJURY TRIAL LAWYER

**18-WHEELER ACCIDENTS**

**1-800-222-1204 CLAYDUGAS.COM**



Edison Plaza  
BEAUMONT

Williams Tower  
HOUSTON

**Guzardo reviews documents detailing his time in the service**



**GOOD**

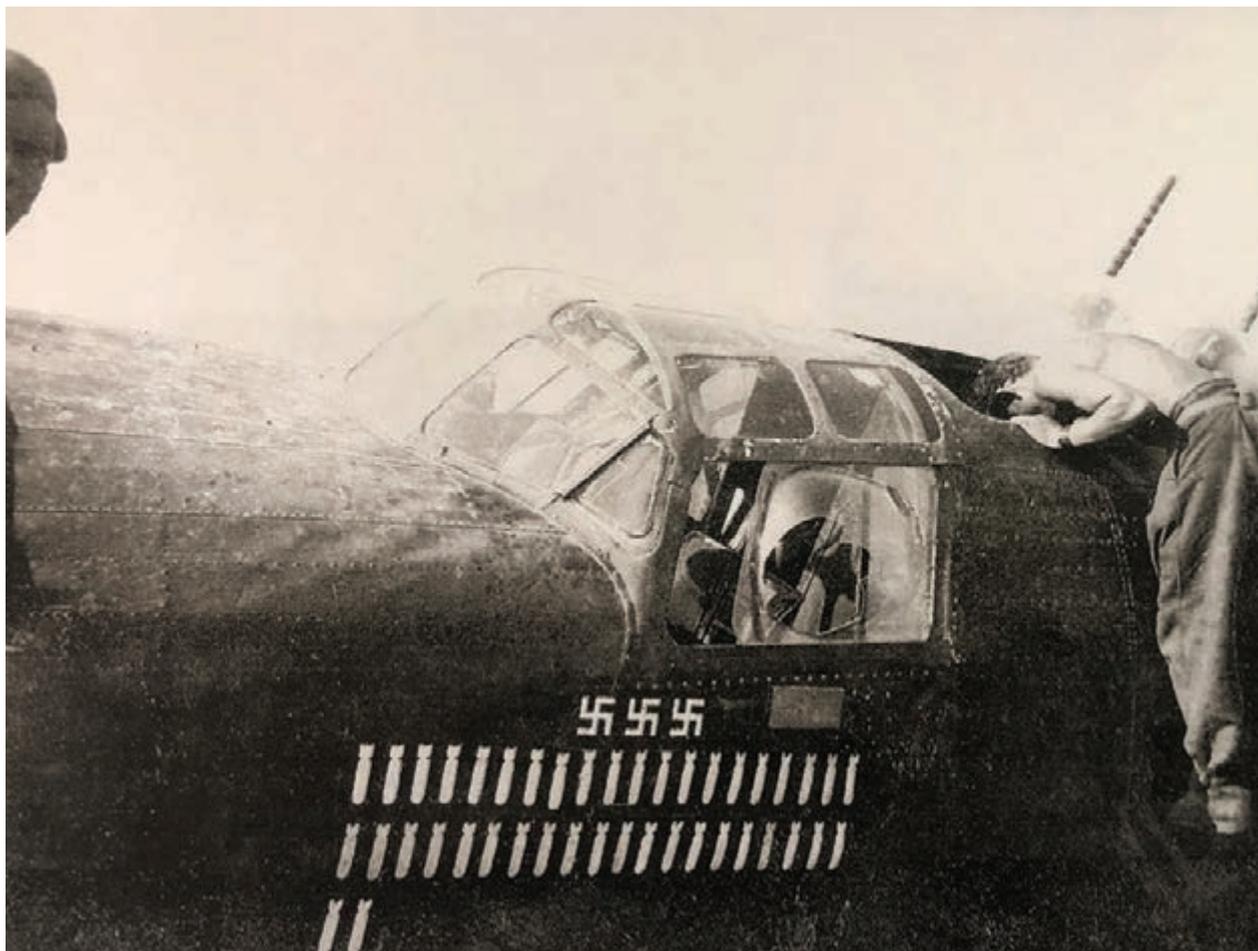
from page 5A

were separated and integrated in with the roughly 12,000 other soldiers held there, Guzardo said. Living luxuries in the POW camp where Guzardo stayed were minimal, but Guzardo said he didn't think it was the worst.

"The prison camp was OK. Pretty nice," he said, before rethinking his original analysis. "Well, not really nice, but we were comfortable."

Guzardo and his fellow captives at the camp did what they could to pass the time as best as possible.

"Some guys learned three or four languages while we were there," Guzardo said. His comfort, however, was found in the written word of the English language. Thanks to Red Cross efforts and care



packages, Guzardo was able to get his hands on several books, the stories unfolding on the page keeping him company while he was held hostage in a foreign land. Of the roughly nearly dozen books he enjoyed at the prison camp, Guzardo has special affection for "The Diary of Samuel Pepys," originally published in 1825. Not that Pepys was his absolute favorite.

"They are all my favorite after I read them," he joked.

Caught up in recollecting all the text that let him feel free when in prison, Guzardo almost forgets the hellish days that came with his imprisonment.

Feb. 6, 1945, is hard to forget, though.

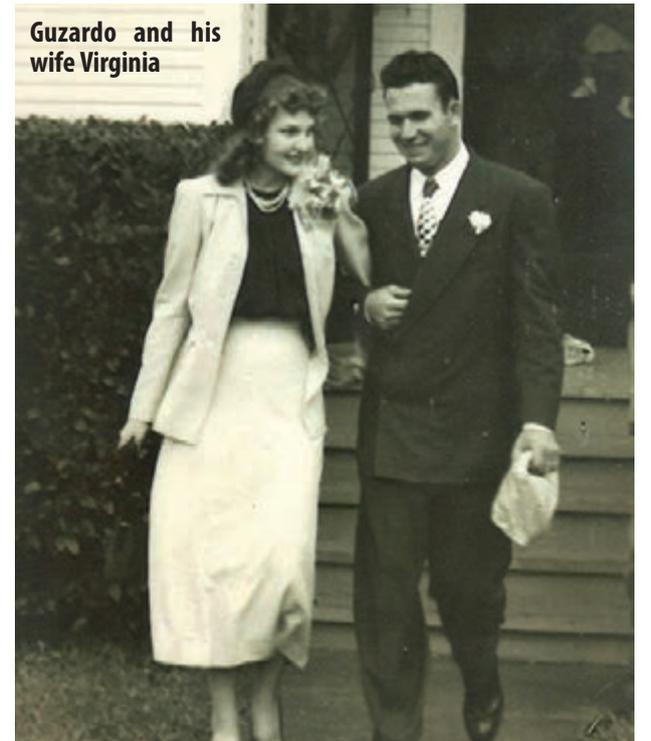
"They heard the Russians were coming, and they wasn't going to turn us over to them," Guzardo said.

Over the next 60 days, Guzardo and other POWs from the camp were marched through the snow and ice of Hungary without rations, water or any clothes other than what was on their backs when they left the meager compound they had called home for the last seven months. They slept in barns, went months without a shower or shave and were forced to cook what food they could scrounge in hog troughs.

"I was lucky," Guzardo said. "We could usually trade something for potatoes."

Many men, including one of Guzardo's best friends from Nederland High School, wouldn't be as lucky. More than 70 years later, Guzardo still mourns the young men who never made it home.

**Guzardo and his wife Virginia**



Once Guzardo made it back stateside, it didn't take him long to find and marry the love of his life, Virginia, the couple raising a family of five children and operating a feed store for the next several decades. Throughout his life since, Guzardo has never lost the passion he has for taking in a good book or two, and he knows well the impact a great read can have on its partaker. In addition to collecting his own personal library of literary works, Guzardo has donated many more to schools and libraries throughout Southeast Texas.

"Our writers have contributed so much to this area and preserved so much of our history," Guzardo said of his favorite authors, those who hail from locales close to home. "There ought to be a Writer's Day to celebrate them."