

WWII ace pilot is subject of new documentary

(Reprinted with permission of The Elkin Tribune in North Carolina. A subject of the article, World War II fighter ace Maj. George Preddy, is a relative of Joe Noah of Clarksville — Ed.)

By **KAREN HOLBROOK**
Elkin (N.C.) Tribune

Local film artist Shawn Lovette is nearing completion of his project chronicling the life of World War II ace pilot Maj. George Preddy, marking his first independent work.

Originally a native of the Charlotte area, Lovette settled in State Road after working and living in locations such as Los Angeles, California, and Sydney, Australia. "While I was living in Australia working on 'Happy Feet' I researched my grandfather's story," said Lovette of the way he came across his latest project. "He was a fighter pilot during WWII, flying the P51 Mustang."

While researching his own grandfather, Lovette uncovered the story of Preddy, a native of Greensboro. A veteran of visual arts for film, Lovette became enthralled with the story of the fighter pilot and made it his mission to create a blockbuster-style documentary to air on public television.

"We're using the same technology as major Hollywood films," said Lovette, who has worked on projects such as "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes," "Terminator Genisys," "Noah," "Superman Returns" and many others.

Experiencing success in his work with Warner Bros. on the digital animation feature film, "Happy Feet," Lovette was part of a team that won both the Academy Award Oscar and BAFTA Award (British Oscar) for Best Animated Feature Film.

While simultaneously working on major studio films, Lovette continued to keep his passion for the George Preddy film alive by working and researching as opportunity was made available. In 2012, Lovette began interviewing any of Preddy's relatives he could locate, including first cousin to George Preddy, Joe Noah, and the only sibling of four to make it past WWII, Rachel Preddy Harris.

"I realized, if you're going to do something, you're going to have to go independent," said Lovette. "It's a high risk, high reward."

"Carolina Ace" will be Lovette's debut work as a director, writer and producer. The documentary is a story of America's greatest P-51 Mustang ace who was well on his way to becoming one of the greatest fighter pilot aces in world history before being tragically killed in a friendly-fire incident on Christmas Day of 1944. His



Maj. George Preddy (Image from the Preddy Memorial Foundation, www.preddy-foundation.org)

brother, Bill Preddy, also was tragically shot down during the war.

According to Lovette, recreating a film of this era would be nearly impossible without the visual technology that is now available. "We've never seen thousands of bombers in flight," Lovette said. "It would also be impossible to film because they're just aren't enough planes left from that era."

Lovette and his team recreated each of the planes flown by Preddy for the film including his most famous Cripes A'mighty 3rd.

The story of Maj. Preddy is that of an underdog, according to Lovette. "George was a skinny guy, very quiet, and only spoke when he had something to say," said Lovette. Through his research, he found that Preddy was rejected by Naval Aviation three times, despite him already having been a civilian pilot.

Preddy was well accomplished as a barnstorming pilot, according to Lovette, often performing acrobatics for anyone who would watch. In one story uncovered during his research, Lovette claimed that Preddy was flying, performing his impromptu acrobatic show when he found a family with a girl who needed to be taken to the hospital. To save time, Preddy offered to fly her to the hospital, getting her there quicker than her parents could by car.

Once the project is completed, Lovette hopes to gain national syndication for the film about the American hero. "I certainly believe it will go national," said Lovette of the film he hopes will springboard other projects including films about the Battleship North Carolina and Vietnam War.

In the meantime, Lovette and his team are hoping to draw funding from corporate sponsors to reach the final stage of completion on the project. More information on the project may be found at carolina-ace.com or at preddy-foundation.org.

While the documentary will likely appeal to adults, Lovette's main cause is to inspire children. By bringing a local hero to life through cinematic technology, Lovette hopes to continue the brave legacy of Major George Preddy.

Local filmmaker shares heroic story

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