

**Lodi History Highlights**  
**The Tom Luggiero Story**  
**By Artie Maglionico**

**Mr. Tom Luggiero, a lifelong member of the Lodi community and a veteran of WWII, remembers a time when milk and butter were delivered by horse and wagon and a chocolate éclair could be purchased at the local pastry shop for a nickel. It was a time when neighbors shared in one another's laughter and tears. Yet, for the most part, it is the laughter that Tom remembers most of all.**

**Tom Luggiero was born on January 29, 1921 and was raised, along with his two brothers Anthony and Raymond and sister Rosalie, on Park place in Lodi. His father Angelo arrived in Lodi from a small province in Northern Italy in the late 1800s. Angelo, a carpenter by trade, married Lodi resident Mary DelGreco in the mid 1920's.**

**Tom graduated from Columbus elementary school in 1934 and was a member of the Lodi High Schools first graduating class of 1938. "In those days " recalls Tom "We used to play baseball and football on the rocky fields of Lodi. We had no equipment to speak of so there were a lot of bumps and bruises." During the summer Tom remembers a peddler driving a flatbed through the side streets of town selling bananas for a penny each. "Those bananas were a foot long." recalls Tom "Today you pay 70 cents a pound."**

**Also among Tom's memories are the days when Borden's went from house to house delivering milk by horse and wagon. "At 3 a.m. my brothers and me used to try and hit the horse with pea shooters from our upstairs window." laughed Tom. "we never hit him."**

**In February of 1942 Tom was drafted into the United States Navy. After the rigors of boot camp in Newport R.I. Tom was sent to serve as a fire controller third class on an Aircraft carrier known as the Intrepid. From its home in Norfolk V.A. THE MIGHTY CARRIER left port and headed West to San Francisco via the Panama Canal. While going through the canal The Intrepid suffered damage to her bow forcing her to undergo extensive repair. " that was a bad sign." Says Tom "We got hit 5 times after that either by torpedoes or Kamikaze planes. After each hit we returned to port for repair." According to Tom the ship was always too damaged to be repaired at sea. Meanwhile Tom's wife Mildred, whom he married in 1943, quit her job at Curtiss Wright and traveled to San Francisco to be closer to her husband.**

**While serving on the Intrepid Tom saw action in the battle of Mid Way, the Turk Islands and the Philippines. "I was always afraid of death." Says Tom " If a Kamikaze was heading in my direction I'd start making promises to God. Till this day I wonder how I lived through it all." As an operater on the 5" guns Tom would often see Japanese planes appear from out of the blinding sun which by then**

**was often too late. “ I remember seeing the carrier U.S. Franklin get swarmed by Kamikaze pilots.” Says Tom “ 500 American sailors lost their lives that day.”**

**Aboard the Intrepid Tom recalls the time when 11 men were killed while manning a 40 mm gun. “A Japanese plane crashed into the side of the ship and killed them instantly.” Says Tom “we buried them at sea.” Tom admits that although he saw a lot of action Navy men had it much easier than foot soldiers. When not under attack a sailor ate well, took regular showers , got his uniform washed and dried on a daily basis and Cigarettes sold for 50 cents a carton . “ It was like a big city.” Says Tom “ we even had ice cream.”**

**Most admired by Tom while on board ship were the Pilots. “ They had to take off and land at night during relentless Japanese attacks and heavy seas with little or no lights.” Says Tom “ I give those brave pilots a lot of credit. They were the bravest guys I ever knew.” Once, during an enemy assault The Intrepid was hit in the steering mechanism by a torpedo. With planes crashing at her side and fire raging across her bow the crippled war ship limped her way to Pearl Harbor all but out of control. From there she sailed back to San Francisco where she was dry docked until her wounds were healed and she was sea worthy again.**

**After being discharged in 1945 Tom and Mildred moved into the Luggiero Park Place home. During that time Tom was employed by the U.S. Post office. Ten years later,in 1956, Tom found employment as a printer for the Record**

**where he retired in 1986. Tom and Mildred have two children Tom and Diane. They have four grandchildren Robin, Rikki, Tracey and Tom junior. “Its hard to picture the way the town of Lodi was in the old days.” Says Tom “ I spent my life here and it is still a beautiful town.”**