

## *February Speaker – Jerry Whiting*



**Jerry Whiting**

Jerry was born in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and moved to Pleasant Hill, California (San Francisco Bay Area) when he was in high school. He obtained a Bachelor's Degree at U.C. Santa Barbara and later a Master's degree at John F. Kennedy University. He worked as a counselor for a few years and then began a 25+ year career in law enforcement in the San Francisco Bay Area, working in a variety of assignments including patrol and the detective bureau. He was also a hostage/crisis negotiator during the last 15 years of his career.

In this presentation Jerry discusses a couple of his investigations that began when he was researching stories for his six books. The first case involved the U.S. bombing of Auschwitz by U.S. bombers and a bomber crew that was shot down right over Auschwitz. Some of the crew were killed in the plane, one was killed by an SS soldier on the ground and several parachuted safely. Jerry promised one of the survivors, who shared his story, to attempt to locate the family of an airman who was reported to have been killed after he successfully bailed out of the plane. A U.S. Dept of Defense historian and the Secretary of Defense himself confirmed the airman, who was Jewish, was killed by the SS shortly after landing. The results of his search are beyond amazing. Jerry found the airman alive and well, living in the Berkeley Marina and reunited him with the other airman.

The second story involves a bomber crew shot down over Yugoslavia, where some of the men were killed and others survived, including an airman who was initially captured by German soldiers, who escaped later the same day. Jerry had the airman's story from the airman who was still living, who was rescued by two teenage girls. He had little else. Frustrated with the limited information, he was working on the story when a phone call came, asking for his assistance in identifying a bomber found in the Adriatic Sea. Incredibly enough, Jerry identified the bomber as the one in the story he was writing. His Croatian contact found one of the girls who saved the airman's life, providing a heartwarming end to this story. Jerry went to Croatia to meet her.

There are two messages to be learned from this presentation. One is that researching history always brings unintended and magical information. The other message is that the stories never end.