



**Frank Bolek at Stallion 51 Flight Center**

## **Greetings!**

*From Gayle Bolek, daughter of WWII Checkertail Frank Bolek:*

It is with much sadness that I let you know that our beloved father Frank M. Bolek passed away Friday, January 29, 2016.

He will now be flying upside down happy and content with all his WWII Checkertail buddies. You were the best father and husband. We love and miss you always, Dad! xoxoxo



*Photo Montage of Frank's plane flying upside down.  
By Neil Pugh.*

*Frank tells the story of his upside down flying adventures in Neil's Checkertail documentaries.*

My dad did not want a viewing, funeral or to be buried. He wanted to be cremated and his ashes thrown out of a plane or at least taken up in a plane. I am working on this with our good family friend Tony Banta in northern CA who owns the P51 that performed the flyby on the first day of the Camarillo Reunion. Tony may take me for a flight hopefully on my birthday Sept 23rd since my dad and I shared the same birthday.



*Pilots Jim Thomas (P-40) and Tony Banta (P-51) arrive in a spectacular flyby on Media Day of the "Wings Over Camarillo" Air Show, in honor of the Checkertails 2012 Reunion.*

As there will be no funeral or memorial, in lieu of flowers, the family wishes for donations to be made to the Checkertails Organization. Dad loved the Reunions and the mission of the Organization to keep the Checkertails flying.

To make a donation, you may:

Mail a check payable to the Checkertails Organization, 1004 Foulk Road Wilmington, DE 19803.

Or, you may donate electronically through PayPal to [checkertails325@verizon.net](mailto:checkertails325@verizon.net).

Thank you from Pat, Gayle and Marty Bolek.

## Memories & Tributes

Frank Bolek was born on September 23, 1922 in Ely, Minnesota.

He enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in 1942 and served as a fighter pilot in the Mediterranean Theater in the WWII 325th Fighter Group Checkertail Clan in the 317th Fighter Squadron.

Frank had a life long love of military aircraft.

He attended many air shows, enjoyed the static displays and went up in WWII planes at every opportunity.

In 2009, Frank and his daughter Gayle went up in a tandem flight of P-51 Mustangs with the Stallion 51 Flight Center.

**"(The troops)  
stuck together very  
much because they  
needed each other.  
We acted as a unit.  
It was our duty."  
— Frank Bolek**



*"Frank and his daughter Gayle Bolek flew with us back in May 2009 and have stayed friends ever since. Frank was a wonderful man, a fighter pilot to the core, was such a gentleman and always had a smile on his face when he saw Lee and myself and the stories... He will be missed. Blue Skies Frank! Angela, Lee and the Stallion 51 Team."*



*Pat & Frank Bolek with Neil Pugh at the 2010 Reunion - Wash. DC WWII Memorial.*

*Frank at the 2015 Reunion Memorabilia Show, Tyndall AFB, Panama City, FL.*



At the 70th Annual Checkertail Reunion last year at Tyndall AFB in Florida, Frank was gifted a piece of the Italian BF 109 K (ME109) fighter plane he shot down over Italy on April 16, 1945. Giuseppe Giagualano of the Checkertails di Lesina presented the artifact to Frank which Frank then donated to the Tyndall AFB Checkertail Historian Ted Roberts.

*A surprised and delighted Frank holds the Italian BF 109 K fighter plane artifact.*

*Gayle, Frank and Lt Col "Solo" Kunkel, Tyndall 325th Fighter Wing Vice Cmdr.*



*Tyndall AFB Flight Line: In front of the F-22 Raptor, our Checkertail Heroes!  
Dick Hoffman, John Gaston, Frank Bolek, Tom Batey, MB Guy.*



**From Gayle, on behalf of the Bolek Family**

Thank you so much to everyone who has expressed their shared feelings of loss and pride in our family's hero. It is heartwarming to know that he was loved and esteemed by so many. Our mom, Pat Bolek, has recently moved so please contact her and our family through email to me at [gbolek1@gmail.com](mailto:gbolek1@gmail.com).

*Frank and daughter-in-law Beth Bolek hauling completed 2012 Reunion Goodie Bags with Checkertail Org. President Kathy Cluff.*

*Frank & his son Marty, with grandsons Jake & Zander 2012 Reunion in Camarillo, CA.*



*Gayle, Pat & Frank 2014 Checkertail Reunion in Tampa, FL.*



## **In Closing**

Gayle writes:

*"Chris Mayer (former Tyndall AFB Squadron Commander) said it best ...*

*'They are all together again, now, with new wings and shiny new Mustangs, to make new and fun memories, along with all the other boys that never came home or who left us earlier in the intervening years. Back to their boyish charms and youthful mischievousness as they fly and laugh, this time without enemies about. The beer is always cold, and the smiles are always warm.'* "

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