

# Veterans Share War-time Experiences

By Ginny Dumond

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — Old wounds came open and unanswered questions sought explanation as the members of the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association met with Schweinfurt high school students June 17.

SSMA president Bud Klint and German leader Georg Schafer sat on a panel with two German students to answer student questions concerning World War II.

When addressing his feelings toward the war, and more specifically the air battle of Oct. 13, 1943 over Schweinfurt, Klint admitted his fear. "I was scared," he said. "We had so much opposition and we lost so many planes." When other planes were shot from the sky, Klint said the sky was unbelievable. "There were big black bursts and then another one and another one and another one," he said. "I can tell you definitely it was a fearful mission for us."

Next, the airmen were asked about their reason for fighting. "We were fighting for democracy," Klint said. "We wanted to curtail Nazi expansion in Europe."

Soon conversation shifted to the motives and feelings of the airmen as they bombed villages that were certain to contain civilians unprepared for an attack.

The discussion soon shifted to Coventry, England, a town nearly destroyed by German bombing. "Coventry was also an industrial target, and central to English weaponry," Schafer said.

The panel made an effort to point out the dedication on both sides to honoring and serving their country. "We killed a lot of innocent people on the ground and you killed a lot of innocent men in the air," Klint said. "All of us were doing what we had to do as soldiers."

Tom Romero, SSMA, served as a ball-turret gunner in the war and was on his 25th mission the day Schweinfurt was bombed. "I was just ready to get home," he said, "and after 25 missions we could return home."

Near the conclusion of the discussion, SSMA member George Roberts spoke to the students about democracy. "That's something you have today that Germans did not have then," he said. "When it comes to war you have to convince people they are right."

In the process of war, he said, tough decisions have to be made. "When we bombed Japan we were in favor of it, *I* was in favor of it," Roberts said, "because it meant that the war would be over faster and in the long run less people would die."

Later that evening as the SSMA members spoke of their war experiences at a local officers club, James Murray spoke to timeless imprint the war has had on his life. "Today I don't have a very good memory," he said. "I lose my umbrellas and things, but this I remember."