



COMMEMORATIVE
AIR FORCE

THE FLYER

Commemorative Air Force
B-29 / B-24 Squadron

Lil meets Rosie



A historic visit to Willow Run

August 2014

Photo by Angie Whitney



COMMEMORATIVE
AIR FORCE

*B-29/B-24 Squadron
Officer & Staff Listing*

Position	Name	Telephone	E-mail
Squadron Leader	Neils Agather	817-946-9950	vnagather@agathertx.com
Executive Officer	Tom Travis	972-241-8102	TomTravis@aol.com
Adjutant & Personnel Officer	Debbie Travis King	469-688-1709	Squadadjutant@gmail.com
Crew Chief	Rick Garvis	972-380-8800	rgarvis@cafhq.org
Finance Officer	Gerald Oliver	312-953-0357	goliver@behringerharvard.com
Maintenance Officer	Don Obreiter	580-471-3048	obreiter@cablone.net
Operations Officer & B-29 Tour Coordinator	David Oliver	630-853-9624	B29ops@gmail.com
Public Information Officer	Kim Pardon	913-636-6250	kmpardon@yahoo.com
Ride Captain	Jon Oliver	312-925-6184	jake8350@gmail.com
Safety & Training Officer B-29 Scheduling Officer	John Flynn	717-632-4497	jnaflvnn@embarqmail.com
B-24 Go Team Leader	Allen Benzing	214-707-2726	albenzing@gmail.com
B-24 Scheduling Officer	Jim Neill	214-762-5891	jakat2@verizon.net
Facility Manager	Jim Neill	214-762-5891	jakat2@verizon.net
Appearance Captain	Henry Bordelon	972-406-0644	pixiee@sbcglobal.net
Docent Emeritus	Jack Bradshaw	214-987-1963	jackbradshaw@sbcglobal.net
Webmaster	Rick Greer		rgreer4@gmail.com
The Flyer Editor	Konley Kelley	214-995-5184	konartist@verizon.net



Look close! Lil on Boeing Plaza at Oshkosh.

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Special Feature:
“Rosie the Riveter
at Willow Run”
By *Lisa Foster*



CAF AirPower History Tour

National Air Tour of Historic World War II Aircraft



"FIA"



DIAMOND LIL



Midland, TX	thru Aug 27	Warbirds on Parade	Aug 30
September Mini Tour		485th Bomb Group Reunion	Sept 18
Oklahoma City, OK	Sept 18-21	50th and Final	
Enid, OK	Sept 22-24	Cavanaugh Flight Museum	
Fayetteville, AR	Sept 25-28	Addison, TX	
WWII Expo		WWII Expo	
Dallas Executive Airport	Oct 2-5	Dallas Executive Airport	Oct 2-5
Fall Tour		Fall Tour	
Midland CAF AirSho	Oct 10-12		
TBD, TX	Oct 13-22		
College Station, TX	Oct 16-19	Vicksburg, MS	Oct 16-19
TBD, LA	Oct 20-22	TBD	Oct 20-22
New Orleans, LA	Oct 23-26	New Orleans, LA	Oct 23-26

For more tour stop details, go to www.AirPowerTour.org

WWII Air EXPO coming up first weekend in October!

Many members will be needed at the WWII Air EXPO scheduled at Dallas Executive Airport on October 2-5. Volunteers are needed to help at the gate, flight line safety, aircraft crew and many other jobs.

Please volunteer to help. It will be a lot of fun. Help contribute to a great show at our future home in Dallas!



COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

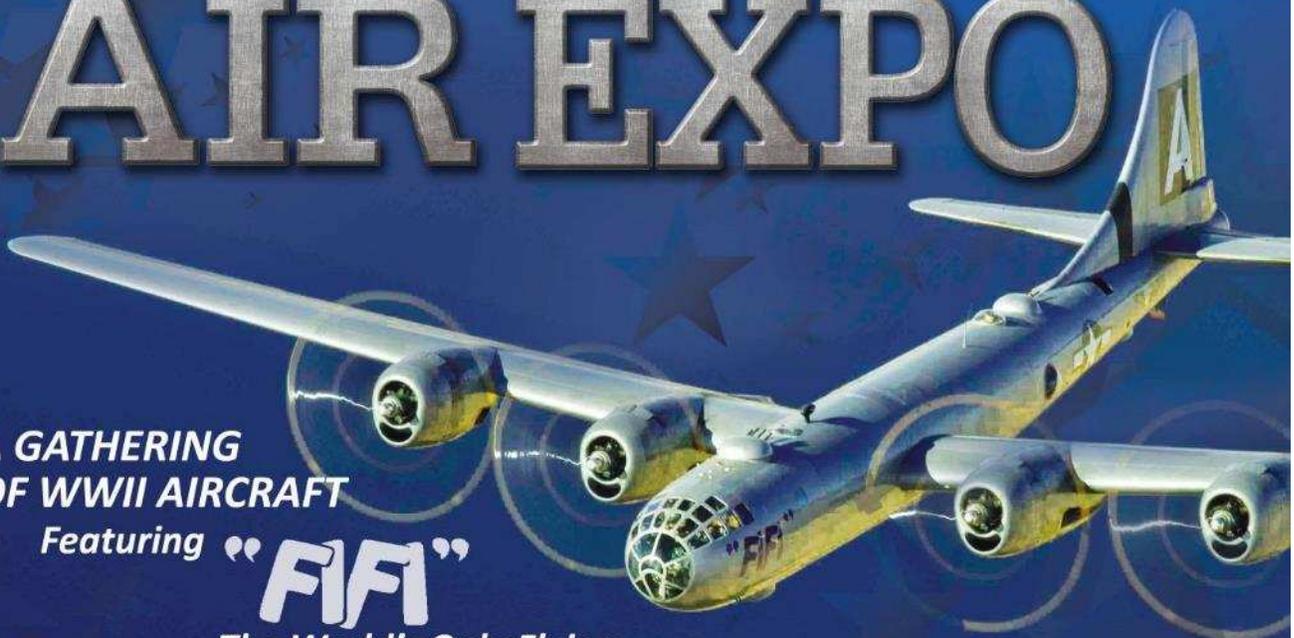
WORLD WAR II

AIR EXPO

A GATHERING OF WWII AIRCRAFT

Featuring "FIFI"

The World's Only Flying B-29 Superfortress



OCT. 3-5
9 A.M. - 5 P.M. DAILY



DALLAS EXECUTIVE AIRPORT

FEATURING:

- B-29 Superfortress
- B-24 Liberator
- P-51 Mustang
- SB2C Helldiver
- C-45 Expeditor
- Military Vehicles
- Vintage Cars
- Aircraft Rides
- Food, Drinks and More...

SPECIAL GUEST:



See the Red Tail RISE ABOVE Exhibit and P-51C Mustang.
Watch the *Rise Above* movie featuring Tuskegee Airmen of WWII
FREE with paid admission.

INFORMATION:

General Admission At Gate
Adults (Ages 18 and up): \$15
Youth (Ages 6 - 17): \$5
Kids (5 and under): FREE

Dallas Executive Airport
5303 Challenger Dr.
Dallas, Texas 75232



www.AirPowerExpo.org

Squadron Report

We are in a lull in our flying activities having just completed the two separate summer tours of *FIFI* and *Lil*. *FIFI* is in Midland on display and *Lil* is in Fort Worth undergoing some maintenance. Although not on tour, I know we are all busy with our personal lives at work or with our families and friends this summer.

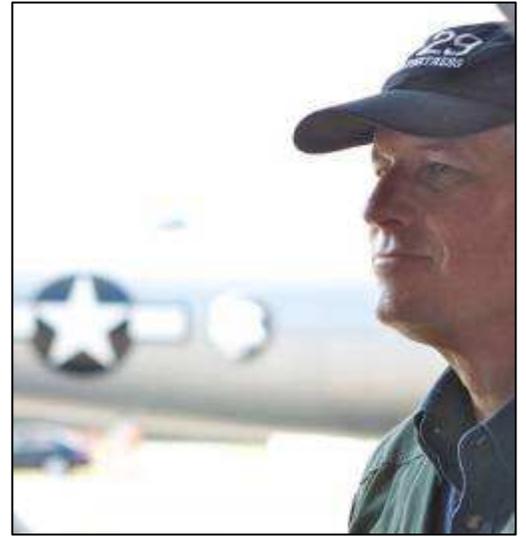
The Squadron had a well attended meeting at our summer Ice Cream Social. Based on the number of people there and the smiles, I think I can safely say everyone had a great time.

The DFW wing was invited. Of course we have considerable overlap in membership with the two units, so it was fun for all of us to be together.

With the new National Headquarters, I expect the two units will be collaborating a bunch. Be sure to take a look at the schedule for the fall. There are many activities planned for *FIFI* and *Lil*. From a short tour to neighboring states, to the Dallas Expo and our New Orleans stop which is planned with the National WWII Museum. There are a lot of opportunities for you to get involved. One item of note, we will have our final meeting of the year on 15 November. It is our annual Chili Cook-Off Start working on your recipes. The competition is fierce. We will also hold our officer elections at that time.

I hope to see everyone on the road.

Neils Agather
Squadron Leader



Lil in Boeing Plaza at Oshkosh. Photo by Gerald Oliver

Executive Officer Report

Last month my daughter, Deb, was invited to speak at a luncheon for Women in Aviation at Oshkosh. She didn't ask me what she should say which is typical. She sometimes asks my advice about technical matters in aviation but these days I find myself asking her advice a lot, too. It's a good relationship that way. I've never tried to influence her career path and she rarely asks my opinion about those things. I've learned not to ask her opinion if I'm not prepared to hear the straight unvarnished truth.



Some airlines and a few corporate flight departments used to have a policy that restricted family members from flying together. Most have now come to the conclusion that such a policy is just plain silly. I wholeheartedly agree. We've flown together a lot in various types of planes and it works well because we each seem to instinctively know what the other is thinking and neither of us is hesitant to speak up if we see something that needs attention. It's a relationship based on mutual respect and trust and I like it that way.

These days Deb and I both instruct at a training center in the DFW area. We are both on the Falcon 900 tri-jet program and find that we can hand off students seamlessly because we teach the same way. Of course, I have to admit she's the better instructor and a much smoother pilot but I'm working on it.

I think you'll enjoy the text of Deb's speech which is in the newsletter.

Tom Travis
Executive Officer

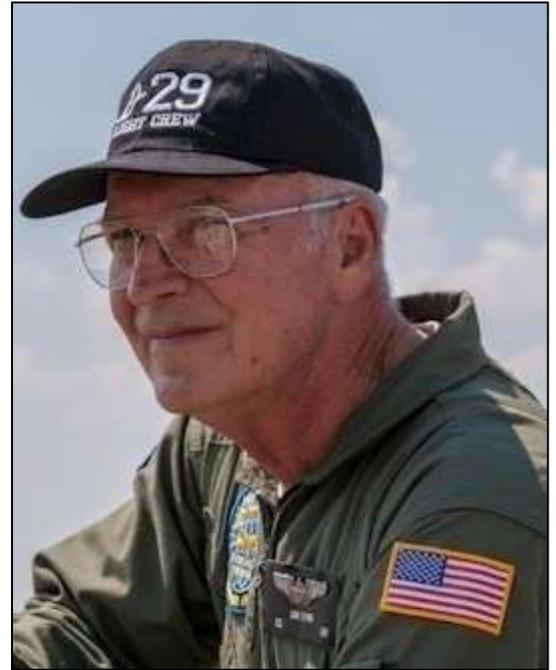


*Debbie Travis King and Tom Travis aboard Diamond Lil
Photo by Raymond Jeffcoat*

Training & Safety Report

Our 2014 summer tour season has been safely completed. *FIFI* appeared at a total of 19 stops during the long trip to and from the West Coast. *Diamond Lil* went out on her own this year and appeared at 11 stops throughout the East, Canada and Midwest, under the leadership of Greg Trobridge and Al Benzing.

Our volunteers worked many long hours to maintain and operate our aircraft during some of the hottest times of the year and they “always got the job done safely.”

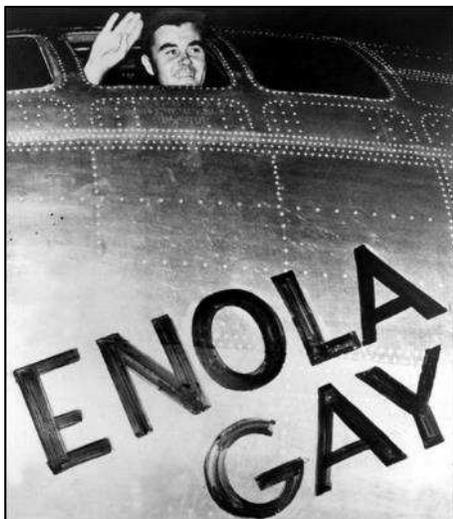


Even with our busy AirPower History Tour schedule, two of our B-29 Scanner instructors, Caren Landis and Phil Pardon continued to train several new scanners. Their hard work has been instrumental to help make certain we continue to have sufficient qualified back end crew members needed for us to safely operate *FIFI*.

We all need to keep up this good work as we conclude the year with our tour stops scheduled during the 2014 fall tour during September and October.

REMEMBER, IF THE JOB IS DONE RIGHT, IT IS SAFE!

John Flynn
Safety Officer



Col. Tibbets on August 6, 1945

Enola Gay Crew



[back row (L-R)] Major Ferebee, Captain Van Kirk, Colonel Tibbets, Captain Lewis
Staff Sgt. Caron, Sgt. Stiborik, Staff Sgt. Duzenbury, Pvt. 1st Class Nelson, Sgt. Shumard

PIO Report

With the B-29 tour over and *Lil* being home – I was thinking we'd get a little break – but no. Several events are looming large. The CAF World War II Air Expo at Dallas Executive Airport the first weekend in October and the Air Expo in New Orleans the last weekend in October are two big events around which we have sandwiched several regular CAF AirPower History Tour stops. Dallas/Fort Worth metro area residents will soon see billboards advertising the event at Dallas Executive. This is the first time we've used outdoor advertising extensively and we're anxious to see the result. Hopefully our event in Dallas will draw the same amount of interest from the press that our air expo in McKinney did last year.

The CAF Red Tail Squadron's traveling *Rise Above* exhibit will be setting up at a nearby school early in the week before the Dallas event, then will travel to the airport on Wednesday to set up for an educational event for local students on Thursday. Former Tuskegee Airmen and other World War II Veterans will be on hand to interact with the kids. Great stories to be told, I'm sure.



Speaking of great stories. I was in Oshkosh when I learned Dutch Van Kirk passed away. I visited him in Stone Mountain, Georgia last November and he was delightful as ever – still completely charming at age 93. We chatted for a couple of hours while he autographed our special edition B-29 calendars. He talked about that important mission and the reaction of the crew when they saw the explosion. We talked about each of the crew members – particularly Paul Tibbets, Jr. And we talked a bit about Tibbets' grandson P4, Brig. General Paul Tibbets IV, whom I had just visited in Shreveport the day before. Dutch was very fond of him and sent a book back with me to give to him.

I get a google alert every time there is a news article about the B-29. Interestingly, P4 was the subject in a news story a few days before Dutch Van Kirk's death. You can read about that here:

http://www.omaha.com/news/metro/grandson-of-enola-gay-s-pilot-now-oversees-nuclear-forces/article_6957a191-21ff-5821-a38f-67a8022165f0.html

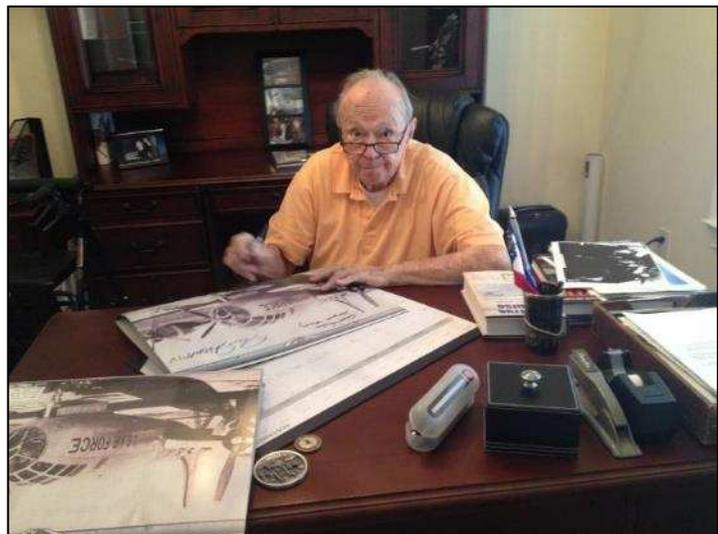
This New York Times article about Dutch Van Kirk's death was the best one by far:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/us/30vankirk.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&_r=0

And on or around the same day, the most interesting man in the CAF did a very nice interview in Pueblo:

<http://www.chieftain.com/news/2767759-120/fifi-war-pardon-plane>

It makes me proud we have kept *FIFI* flying for 40 years in order to tell her story. It also makes me proud that for over two months this summer I received a google alert almost every day notifying me of a story about *FIFI* or *Diamond Lil*. Congratulations to our volunteer crew – many of you worked very hard to make this a successful touring season. Nice work!



Dutch Van Kirk

Financial Report

Summer Tours Conclude

Both of our bombers recently finished up their Summer Tours. And I'm happy to report that both had financially successful tours. The B-29 and the AirPower History Tour headed west and northwest, visiting northern California and Washington State for the first time in many years. There were some cities on the tour that were very receptive to *FIFI* with large crowds. The tour stops in Everett, WA and Sacramento, CA were especially good.

The B-24 took off in a different direction, heading east to the big Reading show, with stops in Canada, Oshkosh and several other cities. This was a departure for the Squadron as we have always had the B-24 fly along with the B-29. Here's what we have found...when not overshadowed by her larger cousin, *Diamond Lil* is a star. The crowds are not as big, but they are more than adequate to justify her touring as the headliner of her own tour stops. Our challenge for the future will be to figure out how to support the B-24 with a support plane or two (Stearman, T-6 ?) and develop a team dedicated to operating *Lil*.

The B-29 tours were led by John Flynn and Phil Pardon. The B-24 tours were led by Greg Trobridge and Al Benzing. Thanks to you and your crews for all the fine work. Please remember to say thanks in person when you see them. The job of Tour Leader takes a great deal of effort and we are beholden to these fine members.

Financial Results

For 2014 we have had good results, but not as good as last year. The B-29 Summer Tour gross results were \$714,000. This is \$280,000 behind last year. Total number of ride flights is lower than we budgeted and less than last year. There are many reasons, but most of it has to do with the cities we select for tour stops. There's no science to it and we often do well, except this year we picked some duds (and know not to go back). We expect the B-29 to lose money for the year. This is also a change as the B-29 has turned a profit in each of the previous three years of touring.

The B-24 Summer Tour gross results were \$215,000. The B-24 will be very close to break even in operating expenses for 2014. This means she will exceed expectations for the year, as we originally budgeted a \$50,000 loss.

Changes for the Future

The need to contain costs is ever with us. Our fuel bills, travel costs, engine repairs and overhead have blossomed. We will need to do our best to keep our costs down. The Officers are working on some different options to accomplish that. Stay tuned for more info in the future.

Gerald Oliver
Finance Officer



Squadron member Bruce Granger of Chicago took leadership to help organize and execute a corporate event with *Diamond Lil* and the Stearman in late July. Thanks Bruce for your efforts to help bring additional revenue to the Squadron.

Gerald –

A beautiful Friday afternoon on July 25th at DuPage Airport in Illinois was the scene for a corporate event. NAI Hiffman, a full-service commercial real estate firm hosted its annual company outing event for employees, guest and families. Travel Express provided a beautiful hangar space and near-runway area for a picnic in the hangar, airplane rides, kids playing with flying toy helicopters, and a chance for everyone to get up close and personal with some beautiful airplanes. The Commemorative Air Force (CAF) brought two special airplanes to the ramp for rides. The B24 World War II bomber provided a very special opportunity for a number of very fortunate employees and clients to take a ride in this very rare and historic airplane. Also providing rides for a number of people was a World War II training aircraft called a Stearman. This open cockpit bi-wing airplane gave riders the excitement of knowing what it was like to feel the wind in their face and the thrill of flight as experienced by trainees many years ago. Over 200 people were in attendance as the people of NAI Hiffman, Travel Express and the CAF enjoyed a fun afternoon at the airport.

*Bruce Granger
Senior Vice President
Industrial Services
NAI Hiffman*



DIAMOND LIL

B-24 Go Team Report

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our crewmembers, the B-24 Tour B has been successfully completed. *Lil* returned to the Vintage Flying Museum at Meacham Field where she will undergo a 50 hour inspection before events this Fall.

Our challenge for the Summer Tours was to execute the planned schedule - do the aircraft tours, fly the ride flights and fulfill the airshow commitments. *Lil* and her crews did just that - with the only significant delay occurring on the transition home. Heavy rain in Michigan caused our return to be one day late.

While I'm proud of crew accomplishments, what stands out to me is that a number of them were new to touring, and of course new to their position. Positive attitudes, willingness to learn and dedication to our mission soon had them working like seasoned hands.

Some Tour B highlights include, flying four ride flights at Marion, IL; being part of the NAI Hiffman Family event at DuPage; flying into OSH; having thousands see *Lil*, flying in the Airshow at OSH and the Thunder Over Michigan airshow.

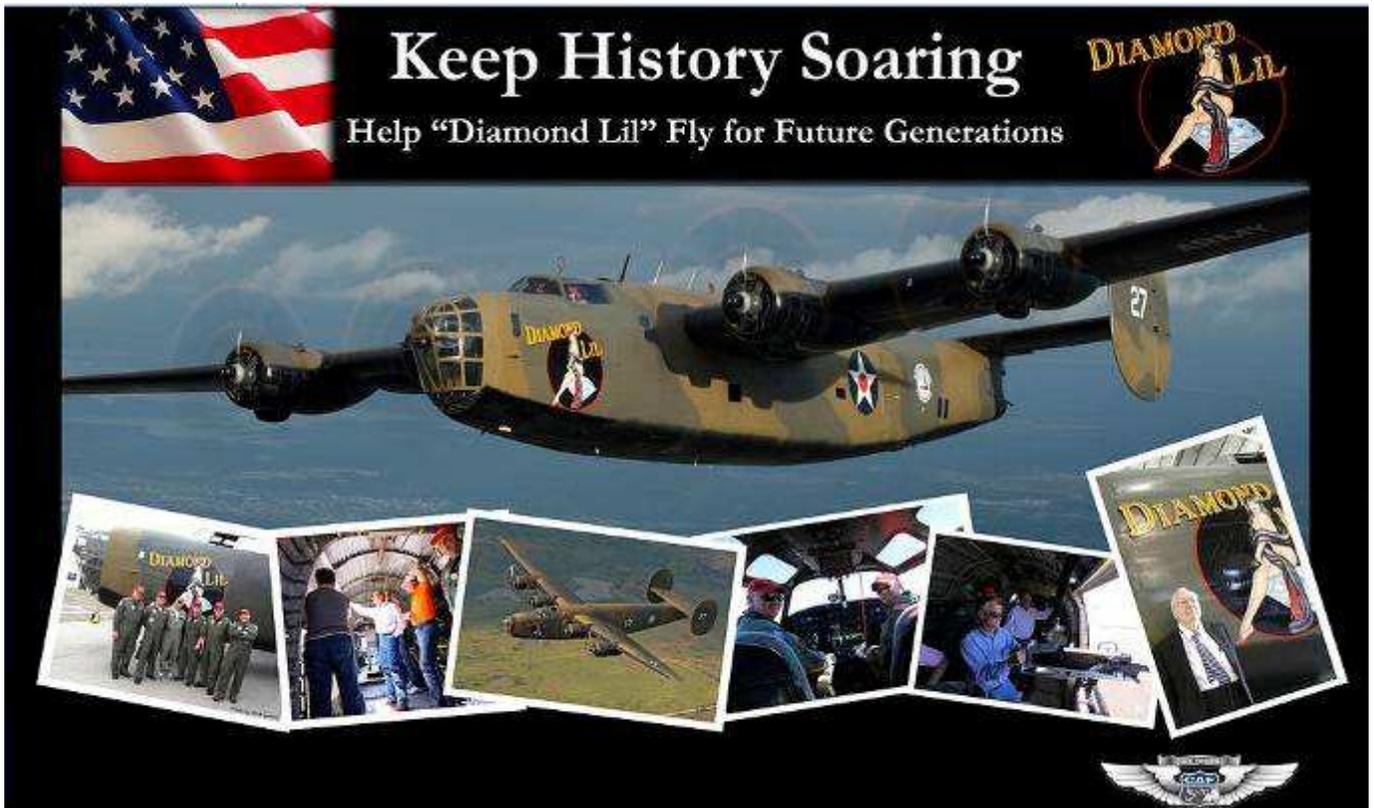
Rob Wickman, a native of Oshkosh, spent most of the week working tour shifts and being a huge help with transportation - Thanks Rob! Steve & Toni Rabroker were awesome as crew and helped out with so many extra tasks. Lisa Foster (Rosie the Riveter) stepped up to take on the Ride Desk. Although she just joined the Squadron, her enthusiasm and hard work helped sell 7 open seats in short order.

Leaving some room for photos, I'll just comment that there are many others who worked long hours on tour - my Thanks to all of you.

Al Benzing
B-24 Go Team Leader
albenzing@gmail.com



Paul Stojkov, Jim Neill, Al Benzing, Toni Rabroker, Steve Rabroker



Keep Diamond Lil Flying!

Diamond Lil is one of the first B-24's built and now one of only two still flying...

During the last airshow season, Diamond Lil experienced a total hydraulic failure, leading to a nose gear collapse during landing. The repairs have required over a year of work by staff and volunteers and many thousands of dollars. Replacement components had to be created by craftsmen, because original parts are no longer available.

Diamond Lil is a very rare B-24A. She was among the very first built, number 18 off the assembly line. She would be followed by over 18,000 B-24's or their variants. As restoration is completed, Diamond Lil will again be flying to airshows and tour stops around the country. Veterans of WWII and their families will have an opportunity to once again see a B-24 Liberator, hear the sound of her engines and even experience a ride on this historic aircraft.

To offset the significant costs of restoration and to keep Diamond Lil flying, we need the help of many. There are volunteers who donate their time and talent, but we also need those who can help with the funds to keep her flying.

Our goal is to raise \$75,000 to replenish the funds required to repair the damage from the nose gear collapse. Please help us meet our goal!

Your tax deductible donation will Keep Diamond Lil Flying!



Keep Diamond Lil Flying Video was produced by Shanty Films LLC
www.Crew713.com
 Produced by Kelly McNichol & Fiona Hall
 Roman Flute-Director of Photography
 Abel Diaz-Grip/Electric
 Daniel Montoya-Editor
 Voice Overs recorded at
 Janimation Studios
 Mike Walker-Sound Engineer
 Produced and directed by Alejandro Mena

www.KeepDiamondLILFlying.org



Member News

August, 2014

The CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron welcomes these new members in August, 2014

Robert Bell, Jr., Sinking Spring, Pennsylvania

Mike Alexander, Mercer Island, Washington

Ronald Coon, Sr., McComb, Ohio

Mary Mount, Modesto, California

Lyle "Doc" McNeal, Nibley, Utah

Eric Pintard, Diamond Bar, California

Susan Bailey, Coppell, Texas

Wilson Meador, Chicago, Illinois

Lawrence Dauer, Jr., Steelville, Illinois

Jack Vos, Wheaton, Illinois

Leticia Bianco, Carrollton, Texas

William Parker, Rainier, Washington

Tim Colman, Plano, Texas

Timothy Raupp, Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Mark Dailey, Allen, Texas

Larry Popp (returning member)

Taylor Ratliff, Ft Worth, Texas

David Hallin, Memphis, Tennessee

Membership Info

If you have any membership questions, please feel free to contact me at

squadadjutant@gmail.com

Dues and new member applications can be mailed to:

Debbie King

13562 Braemar Drive

Dallas, Texas 75234

B29/B24 Squadron Adjutant

469-688-1709



Squadron adjutant, Debbie King



Squadron member, Natasha Sanders, was excited to win a ride on the Bucket at the August Squadron monthly meeting at Dallas Executive. It was her first warbird ride.



Here is Natasha and the other riders with the pilot of the most popular plane in the CAF, Jonathan Oliver.

For Squadron gear and merchandise, don't forget to visit the Px!



<http://www.b29b24px.org/>

Find us on 

Volunteers Wanted

Vintage Flying Museum, Meacham Airport, Ft. Worth

MAINTENANCE IN PROGRESS



B-29 Superfortress



B-24A Liberator

- Mechanics
- General Maintenance
- Help around the Hangar

Contact Rick Garvis, Crew Chief
rgarvis@cafhq.org



www.cafb29b24.org

DFW Wing Commemorative Air Force

WARBIRDS ON PARADE

SATURDAY AUGUST 30, 2014



B-24 Diamond Lil



Lancaster Regional Airport – Beltline and Ferris Rd

Honoring our Veterans and Supporting our Current Military

\$5 Per Person • \$10 Per Car Load — 10 am - 4pm

We are planning for the following: Warbirds, Classic Cars, Paratroopers, Reinactors, Helicopters, Cold War and Cavanaugh Museum's Displays and a Drawing for Two Southwest Airlines Tickets, Food, Drinks, and other Displays in the Hangar. There's Fun for Everyone. Bring your Relatives, Friends and Cameras. You may book Airplane Rides for flights after 4 PM or at a later date.

WWW.DFWWING.COM

Contacts; Russ Coonley 940.466.3672 or coonleyfarms@aol.com

Steve Bennett 817.269.4081 or fortworthbennett@charter.net



Special Feature

Debbie Travis King

Keynote Speech at EAA AirVenture-Oshkosh 2014

Following is Debbie's speech at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh on July 30, 2014. She was the keynote at the WomenVenture Power Lunch held in the Theater in the Woods. Fellow Squadron member and PIO, Kim Pardon noted the audience was not only filled with women aviators but a large number of men. Debbie was rewarded with a standing ovation following her remarks.

Note – several of the photos referenced by Debbie in her speech are not included but we are fortunate to have pictures provided by Kim Pardon and photographer, Raymond Jeffcoat.

Hello and welcome, ladies, to Oshkosh. The greatest fly in on planet earth – how amazingly blessed are we?

My name is Debbie King and I have been asked to speak to you today while you enjoy your lunch; taking a break before you walk and look at airplanes longer than you ever expected you could.

I understand that we have some WASPS in the audience. Can I ask you to stand and can I ask the audience to give them their due and thank them for their service? I'll speak about you ladies in a bit.

As Kelly mentioned, I fly the Commemorative Air Force's B-29 affectionately named *FIFI* and the B-24 named *Diamond Lil* and was featured on the cover of WAI's magazine. Yes, just when you think you are hot stuff cover girl, the mechanics are too busy doing the important stuff to remove the painter's tape. I love pictures. They speak volumes. For instance, this one tells me that I have horrible taste in nail polish. More importantly, it reminds me that there was a hangar full of volunteers and mechanics working on *FIFI* while I was doing a photo shoot. The ones who do the heavy lifting and work the late hours unfortunately are not featured on the cover of magazines. Yet they are the ones that get to the aircraft before dawn and leave the aircraft after dusk and we could not operate without them. This photo reminds me that it's not about me. It's about the crew and the aircraft and the message we carry when we take them on tour.



One of the first questions people ask me is “How on earth did you get that job?” The answer is sort of serendipitous – you know, the right place, the right time, etc. I am a member of the Commemorative Air Force whose mission is to preserve military aircraft, to keep them flying in order to educate and to honor our veterans and the freedoms they fought so hard to preserve. Well, I put in some sweat equity in the deal, I volunteered, was well qualified and the aircraft were hangared less than 3 nautical miles from my front door so things really just fell into place. As I like to say, my WAY found me.

I believe the more interesting and important question is “WHY do you do that?” Why is always the key.

I believe that you can accomplish anything you set your mind to as long as you have a big enough WHY. Some people call it passion, some call it fire in the belly, and some call it drive. I call it WHY. For me, it's softer and more personal than “fire in the belly”. Personally, that sounds like a gastrointestinal issue.

I call my reasons my “Why Bag”. I will unpack four of my biggest WHYs for you today.

Both of my Grandfathers served in WWII. One came home, one did not. My paternal grandfather was killed in Italy shortly before the war ended in the European theater. He was 24. One brother, my Uncle Leroy, survived him. He was a mechanic on B-24s in England during the war.

My Uncle Leroy, whom, to this day, I believe was the best example of integrity, kindness and hard work that I will ever witness was one of the ones who patched B-24s back together. He repaired them and sent them back into the war zone and when they came home, he told me that he had the grim duty of rinsing out the interior with a garden hose – his friends, his colleagues – with a garden hose. Tell me I don't think about that every time I set foot in that B-24.

My maternal grandfather was on Utah beach shortly after D-Day. My Great Uncle Wilson was at the battle of the bulge ; another wonderful, kind soul who came home and simply resumed his life as a woodsman. So, as you can see, it is very personal for me: my family knew honor, my family knew service and and my family knew sacrifice.

The next item in my why bag:

The B-29 has a fascinating history. It was an aircraft born of necessity. The war in the European theater had come to an end but we still had Japan to contend with and the US was now laser focused. We needed an aircraft that could fly higher, faster and further; an aircraft that could carry an enormous bomb load. We were taking the war to the shores of Japan and a ground invasion was imminent.

Unfortunately, the urgency pushed the aircraft into production before it was truly ready. If you rush anything in aviation, danger is right around the corner. One of the early test flights had an engine fire that burned through the wing and crashed with the chief test pilot on board just shy of Boeing Field. The engines were cowled too tightly and had a tendency to overheat and catch on fire. Four huge radials on enormous wings full of fuel – what you do not want is fire. The men began to get spooked and scared of the B-29 because the Superfortress had earned the reputation as a firetrap. Once you get a group of pilots scared and superstitious about something, they can become unmanageable.

Well, Brigadier General Paul Tibbets – whom you may recognize as the commander of the Enola Gay – he was in charge transitioning pilots into the B-29. He knew he had a problem on his hands and he had pilots that were refusing to fly it. Tibbets flew to Avenger Field in Sweetwater Texas, the home and training ground of the Women Air Force Service Pilots or WASPS as we know them. And he found himself two female pilots, Didi Moorman and Dora Dougherty. He trained them on the B-29. He gave them three intensive days of training on the Superfortress. He failed to mention the overheating and fire problems even though there is some evidence that they dealt with it on their check ride. To avoid the issue, he had them bypass the standard power checks before takeoff and sent them on their way around the country. His message to the WASPS was to get out of the aircraft and make sure they know you are a woman. And the men took notice and Mr. Tibbet's psychology worked. It was not a time in history to be shown up by a woman.

National Geographic found a letter that I found interesting. I won't read the whole thing but it proves that Dora and Did truly did make a difference. It is a letter from a pilot – one of Tibbet's intended targets if you will. "It has been many years but I have never forgotten that day at Clovis Air Force Base and never will. I want to thank you for helping me that day at Clovis. I will admit that I was scared, even though I had just returned from flying B-24s in North Africa. You made the difference in my flying from then on. I wasn't the only pilot that felt this way and I am sure that they would thank you too if they knew where you were." Harry McKeown

So, two women stepped up and changed history. They were WASPS – women air force service pilots; trained to ferry aircraft, fly test flights, tow target banners – all in order to free the men for combat. 25,000 women applied to

be a WASP, 1,830 were accepted and 1,074 graduated. 38 died during their service to our country. Because they were not officially part of the US military, when these women died their friends and family pooled together money to ship the bodies home. They were not allowed to use the American flag for their burial ceremonies and were given no honors. All records of the WASP were classified and sealed for 35 years, so their contributions to the war effort were little known and inaccessible to historians.

Johannes Kepler, a world renowned scientist once said, “if I appear to have seen further, it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.” Well, if I appear to be anything special, it is only because I stand on the shoulders of WASPS; Amazing ladies who did amazing things.

I met Dora Dougherty before I flew FIFI and had a chance to chat with her about flying the B29. I will always remember the look in her eye when I asked her if it was difficult to fly. She winked at me and said, “It was so easy a woman could do it.” I loved that. Dora passed away last year – Godspeed, my friend.

This may be one of my biggest whys: If there are any fathers out there, I want you to hear this. There is no greater gift you can give your daughter than to believe in her. It sounds cliché but to a girl growing up, having your father allow you to try, to fail and to be corrected while standing behind you is very empowering. My father did that for me and it made the difference.



This picture was taken a good 6 years before I was allowed to fly the B-24. I wore one of Dad’s old flight suits and remember thinking, “there is no way in hell they will ever let a woman fly this thing...but smile!” But he believed and he knew that things would change.

He was always there saying, “Character is forged upon the anvil of adversity.” And he reminded me that aircraft can not determine gender so why would I let someone tell me that gender matters.

Oh, and I never want to forget this last little WHY: 24 years ago, I took a commercial check ride in a 172RG. When I arrived, the examiner looked up and saw me and was visibly dismayed. After the oral, which was less than pleasant, we walked outside and he looked at this aircraft and wailed, “Oh, Jesus, that’s a lot of aircraft for a little girl like you.”

I enjoy thinking about that statement when I’m in the cockpit of the B-29.



Now here is where I am supposed to give you that rah, rah part of the speech where I tell you that it's easy, set your goals, second star to the right and straight on til morning type stuff, right? Well, I am sorry. I'm not your gal. I will tell you that you can do these things. You can do things far greater and more important than I have done. But you have to put your big girl pants on and you need to buckle up.

They will not line the cockpit floor with rose petals. I know, I know – so sorry. But the fact is that aviation is an arena built by the alpha male, populated primarily by the alpha male and if you want to show up, be seen and be taken seriously, have to prepare yourself. Let me be clear, you do not have to sacrifice your femininity or your beliefs. It's not about becoming a man, it's about creating the right balance; you can be lovely and still be a bad ass. Some helpful hints:

1. If you don't have a sense of humor, develop one. Much to my mother's chagrin, I have an off color sense of humor and it helps. Learn to not only laugh at a dirty joke but also learn to tell one. Never let them see you flinch.
2. Get thick skin – you won't survive if you cry easily and need coddling.
3. Prepare yourself to be better, quicker, and smarter than your male counterparts because you are going to have to lean hard on your skill.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY: Never and I mean never expect to be treated better or differently because you are a woman. If you are qualified on an aircraft, you are a crewmember, not a female crewmember.

One of my favorite authors and researchers, Brene Brown, explains it this way. She looks at life as a metaphorical arena. Aviation is our arena. Standing at the bottom and looking up in the stands, she points out that the one thing that you can count on is the season ticket owners: the hecklers in the cheap seats. And their insults are intended to make you ask "is there a place for me?" "am I as good as they are?" and "do I even deserve to be here?" They are up in the cheap seats. They are not brave enough to ever get in the arena themselves; they find strength in anonymity and distance. But their messages are loud and clear.

Then there are the box seats, the expensive ones for the important people. They built the arena and they built it for people that are like them. If you do not fit in, are not the same as them and do not look like them, you don't belong. It's full of those pilots who call themselves great sticks and tell war stories about their skill and expertise and look down on you because you do not have their experience and never will. They have already determined the odds for you and they don't look good.

But there is always a fan section, a cheering section – the people who want to see you succeed. I've been blessed in

my career; I can look up into my fan section and see family, friends, colleagues, fellow pilots, instructors, mechanics and engineers. Stack this deck in your favor. A loud fan section will drown out the hecklers and it can allow you to ignore the box seats. And here is really the key: stack it with friends that will listen to you unload but NOT the friends who will say, “I can’t believe he said that! What an SOB he had no right go straight to management!” Stack it with friends who will listen to the wrongs and will say, “I’m really sorry, that sucks, you have a right to be upset and angry. When is your next flight because I might have time to bring by a pair of BIG GIRL PANTS because you appear to have lost yours!”

You will need your fan section because when you show up, when you are brave enough to enter this arena of professional aviators and warbird pilots; the chance of a good beat down is 100%. For some reason, in aviation, it is a right of passage.

In the year 2014, I will tell you what I have heard said to me and about me:

She’s just an empty kitchen, that’s all I see.

She’s a war bird wannabe.

What we have here is clearly an equal opportunity moment.

I bet they don’t even let her touch the controls.

They don’t let her do takeoffs or landings.

She couldn’t find a B-29 on a ramp with a map.

And my very favorite when I asked an instructor for help with a system I did not understand, he winked at me and said: You’ve got a lot of reading to do little lady – then turned and walked away.

The old saying, “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” – well there is truth to that. Words can’t hurt you unless you believe them, unless you buy into them even the tiniest bit. Without a buy in, they turn to dust.

I’d like to read a passage from a speech written by Theodore Roosevelt that I think really embodies what I am trying to say:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, AT LEAST HE FAILS WHILE DARING GREATLY, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

The credit belongs to the woman who is bold enough to enter the arena and get her ass kicked; Who gets up, wipes the blood, sweat and tears out of her eyes and schedules the next flight; the credit does not belong to the critics who don’t have the balls to do what you do. It’s as simple as that.

So my challenge to you ladies is to fill your WHY BAGS and hone your skill - when you do, your WAY will find you. When it does, throw your shoulders back, put your chin up and DARE GREATLY.





Special Feature Rosie the Riveter at Willow Run

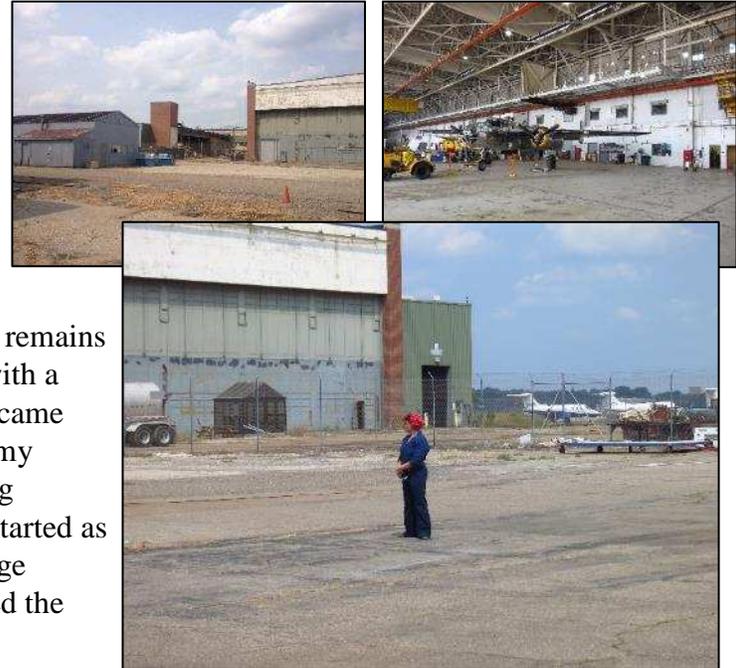
By Lisa Foster →

Pictures by Al Benzing and Angie Whitney



As I look out over this solitary site that once was a booming manufacturing plant filled with the energy of young men and courageous young women of the early 1940's, I'm overwhelmed with emotions. Emotions of disbelief from actually being in the place I'd only studied in books and researched on the internet to prepare for living history presentations I deliver around DFW as "Rosie."

It brought tears to my eyes and emotions of sadness to see the remains of the original Willow Run plant, reduced down to a hangar with a few vintage planes and a demolition site. Finally, a great joy came over me seeing the spot I played a part in preserving through my efforts in DFW to raise funds for the SaveTheBomberPlant.org association. I began to laugh to myself thinking how all this started as a dare with my dear friend Kon Kelley to get a ride on a vintage airplane for my birthday in September, 2011. I never imagined the impact that it would have on my life three years later.



Lisa and Al Benzing

The few days we spent at Willow Run for the "Thunder over Michigan" airshow were a whirlwind of events that would include working as Ride Desk lead (thanks to another good friend Al Benzing), watching in awe the Thunderbirds Air Acrobatics team and the Warbirds Parade, as well as riding with the B-24 crew on the trip home from Ypsilanti, Michigan to Meacham Field. But, what really made the biggest imprint on my memories at Willow Run were the beautiful real "Rosies" and veterans I met during this incredible airshow. I was on sensory overload.



Lisa, some real "Rosies" and one of the Thunderbirds





Alison Beatty atop a unicycle

Prior to my trip to Willow Run, I contacted the Executive Director of the Yankee Air Museum who arranged a meeting with the SaveTheBomberPlant.org team headed up by lead “Rosie,” Alison Beatty. Alison coordinated all the Rosie reenactors and the real “Rosies” whose presence would be seen throughout the airshow. Among the sea of people, these women would stand out with their unmistakable red and white polka dot head scarfs.

Working the Ride Desk as “Rosie the Riveter” allowed me to truly be part of the show. I would not only sell ride flights, I could educate the young and the old about the importance of the women who built these massive bombers. In addition, I had the incredible experience of learning many things from the real “Rosies.”

In assembly line fashion, Alison’s team of “Rosies” would escort the real “Rosies” to meet *Diamond Lil*. There I would meet and greet with amazing ladies by the name of *Ruth, Vivian, Marg* and *Phylis* to name a few. The women, many of whom were the young age of 89 to 95 years old, were happy, spry and so full of life. As the women began to show up, I sat back and watched while they all chatted and got to know one another. It seemed like a homecoming of long lost friends. Meeting Alison, the lead “Rosie,” was like that for me. I felt I had met a kindred spirit. Crazy is the new normal, I thought. How wonderful I’m not alone in this “Rosie” endeavor.

Meeting the real “Rosies,” I was nervous, like a kid on the first day of school with butterflies in my stomach. I imagined these women may have felt the same way on their first day of work at the plant. One thing that sticks out in my mind from my conversations with the women

was how humble they were. Each one said they didn’t realize the importance of what they were doing. They were doing what was necessary so men could go off to war and they could help meet the financial obligations of their families. These women were hard workers. They worked as riveters, buckers and inspectors. Some worked the night shift. Most women I spoke with were single at the time. Quite a few still lived with their parents.

One woman said she and her friend worked at the plant to put themselves through college. The most exciting thing about her time working at the plant was getting to wear nice, tailored slacks. Back then, women wearing slacks was so new she was asked to show off her slacks at fashion shows held at the college. The energy that exuded from these ladies was contagious. Amidst the roar of the Thunderbirds and the chatter of the people touring the plane, I would speak with over a dozen real “Rosies.”



(L-R) Mallie Millan, Marge Anderson Walter, Ruth Webb, Vivian Charlesworth



Under the lens of professional photographer, Jay Sutherland, Lisa matches the pose of a real “Rosie” from a picture taken in the 1940’s. Notice the classic Dr. Pepper bottle in the corner.



After the meet and greet, the ladies would be interviewed in front of the plane by the director and choreographer of this beautiful “Rosie” show, my fellow Squadron member, Angie Whitney. When the interview was complete, the “Rosies,” if they were able, would be assisted into the plane where they would sign the interior of *Diamond Lil* to commemorate the B-24 Liberators they helped build at Willow Run during the war. What an emotional sight that was.



Afterwards, the real “Rosies” would be whisked away on golf carts to the chalets, otherwise known as the canvas VIP Tents. It is here they would continue with interviews, be provided with a nice meal, receive certificates of appreciation and get the “rock star” treatment. One “Rosie” was interviewed by PBS and was the “talk of the tent.”



It was wonderful to eavesdrop on the real “Rosies” reminiscing about life, adventure and love. When a couple of P-51 and B-24 pilots came through, you could see the girls’ eyes light up. One “Rosie” even called me over to ask me if I had seen the cute pilot standing behind me.

In conclusion, there is definitely something magical about being a “Living History Rosie.” I feel I am immediately part of this special club of men and women of that era. They so graciously shared stories with me, some of which I would find out even their own families never knew. In the end, I learned so much about these ladies, veterans, fellow “Rosie” reenactors and myself over my few days at Willow Run. I am so grateful for this opportunity from my B-29/B-24 Squadron and the CAF. I will always treasure my unforgettable experience at Willow Run and bonding with these real “Rosies.” I hope to continue to honor them by telling their incredible story.



Lisa on stage at the CAF AirPower EXPO in October last year.



Bonus Feature

Rosie the Riveter video links

B-29/B-24 Squadron member, Angie Whitney, joined our B-24 crew at Willow Run. With her phone and a mic, Angie recorded some precious interviews with real Rosies, veterans and others VIPs. You can do this, too! Next time you see Angie at a Squadron meeting or event, ask her how she did this. I am happy to include this history in *The Flyer* so we can all share in it. Konley Kelley, Editor.



Mallie Millan

“Rosie the Riveter”

B-29 Airplane Wing

<http://youtu.be/mbaktBkq7iw>



Ruth Webb

B-24 Perimeters

<http://youtu.be/NICtUlGJVXg>



MaryLouise Caldwell Blanco

Welder

<http://youtu.be/FeKztKKloco>



Nancy Meyers

B-24 Fuselage

– Hung Electrical Harnesses

<http://youtu.be/VYorTKVE9Ro>



Vivian Charlesworth

Sewing Department

http://youtu.be/8_eUx8fnENA



Phyllis Gill

Office Worker

<http://youtu.be/tQKcMkBdo10>



Helen Jedele

B-24 Riveter

http://youtu.be/Dw6aSO_R-JQ

Francis Butcher “Rosie the Riveter”

<http://youtu.be/SoJgO24Q0DU>

Pilot Paul Becker

Delphi Wysocki

<http://youtu.be/tqn5jLIHs2Y>



Marge Anderson Walter

- Center Wing Horizontal

<http://youtu.be/5-1CnYVaCug>



Captain Jerry Yellin P-51D pilot -78th FG “Bushmasters,” Iwo Jima

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEy2a9NT3B0&list=UUfKWZLeAb1k2E_a0gehM4sQ



This Month in History

Medal of Honor recipients of the Ploesti Raid

By Konley Kelley



August 1, 1943. If you know the history of the B-24 Liberator, you know this date. When describing the Ploesti Raid, officially designated “Operation Tidal Wave,” historians have called it ambitious, daring, heroic, disastrous and foolhardy. Whatever your view of this mission, we shant forget the bravery of those airmen on that day...Black Sunday.

For our Squadron, there is a constant reminder of the Ploesti Raid. *Diamond Lil* is the only flying B-24A with a profile much like the B-24D models that flew this mission. For many years as a CAF aircraft, she was painted and marked in the scheme of a B-24 from the 98th BG. At the Midland CAF Airsho, *Diamond Lil* would make a pass with pyrotechnics exploding below her to commemorate the most famous B-24 mission of the war.

There have been moments in *Lil's* cockpit when I get chills thinking of what the Ploesti raiders saw beyond the nose of their aircraft that fateful day. Recalled Lt. Norman Whalen, Navigator of the B-24 *Hail Columbia*, “We knew it was a disaster and knew that in the flames shooting up from those refineries we might be burned to death but we went right in.”



Diamond Lil in 1995

In one of the most iconic pictures from WWII, “Sandman” piloted by 1st. Lt. Robert Sternfels appears moments after clearing a towering cloud of smoke. The picture was taken by a camera mounted on the B-24 “Sneezy.”

Historians have studied and debated the Ploesti Raid for many years. As part of our Squadron’s mission to share the history of the B-24 with the public, the story of the Ploesti Raid takes up a significant portion of the 15’ x 3’ banner attached to *Diamond Lil* when she is on display. CAF B-24 pilot, Al Benzing, and I led a presentation on the history of the B-24 Liberator this spring for a community college in Dallas. We provided details of the Ploesti mission as well as the stories of the five men who were awarded the Medal of Honor. This article will provide a synopsis of the mission with a focus on the five men who were awarded our nation’s highest military honor.

Ploesti was an inviting target for the Allies. Early in the war, the Romanian government turned to Hitler for protection against the Soviet threat. Without firing a shot, Germany now held one of the richest oil reserves in Europe and refining capacity to fuel the armor and aircraft of its war machine. When the Allies made gains in North Africa, plans were drawn up to bomb the oil refineries in and around Ploesti. The logistics of such a mission were staggering – above all selecting the right aircraft to deliver the destructive force to do the job.

Of the heavy bombers available to the Allies, the B-24 Liberator was the only aircraft with the range to reach Ploesti from bases in North Africa and the payload to deliver a significant blow to the target. As planners argued the number of sorties necessary to achieve mission objectives from high altitude, a controversial strategy was propagated by Col. Jacob E. Smart. Smart argued the attacking force could bomb with much greater accuracy in a low level attack. A higher percentage of the target would be destroyed with fewer aircraft in a single mission relying on the element of surprise. He argued the aircraft could evade radar at low altitude. The attacking force would number roughly 200 aircraft comprised of five B-24 bomb groups. Losses were estimated to be 30 percent – deemed an acceptable percentage for this objective. Smart’s plan was approved and the men and aircraft to fly the mission were assembled at bases in Benghazi, Libya.



Low-level practice got underway. The B-24 crews knew the likelihood of survival if hit over target was minimal at best. British gunners reported they could easily shoot down the lumbering B-24 Liberators. Information about the defenses around Ploesti was sketchy at best. It was known the Germans had a variety of weapons including 88mm, 37mm and 20mm anti-aircraft guns along with explosives attached to barrage balloons positioned around the refineries. Stories of poorly trained Romanians manning these weapons – even scattering to bomb shelters during an air raid – circulated among the men.



Despite the risks they faced on the mission, only three of the 1,753 men assigned refused to fly. On August 1, 1943, 178 Liberators departed Benghazi for the 1,200 mi journey to Ploesti. Extra fuel tanks were added in the forward bomb bay and each bomber carried from 3,800 to 4,500 lbs. of ordnance. Waist gunners had incendiary bombs to throw from their planes.



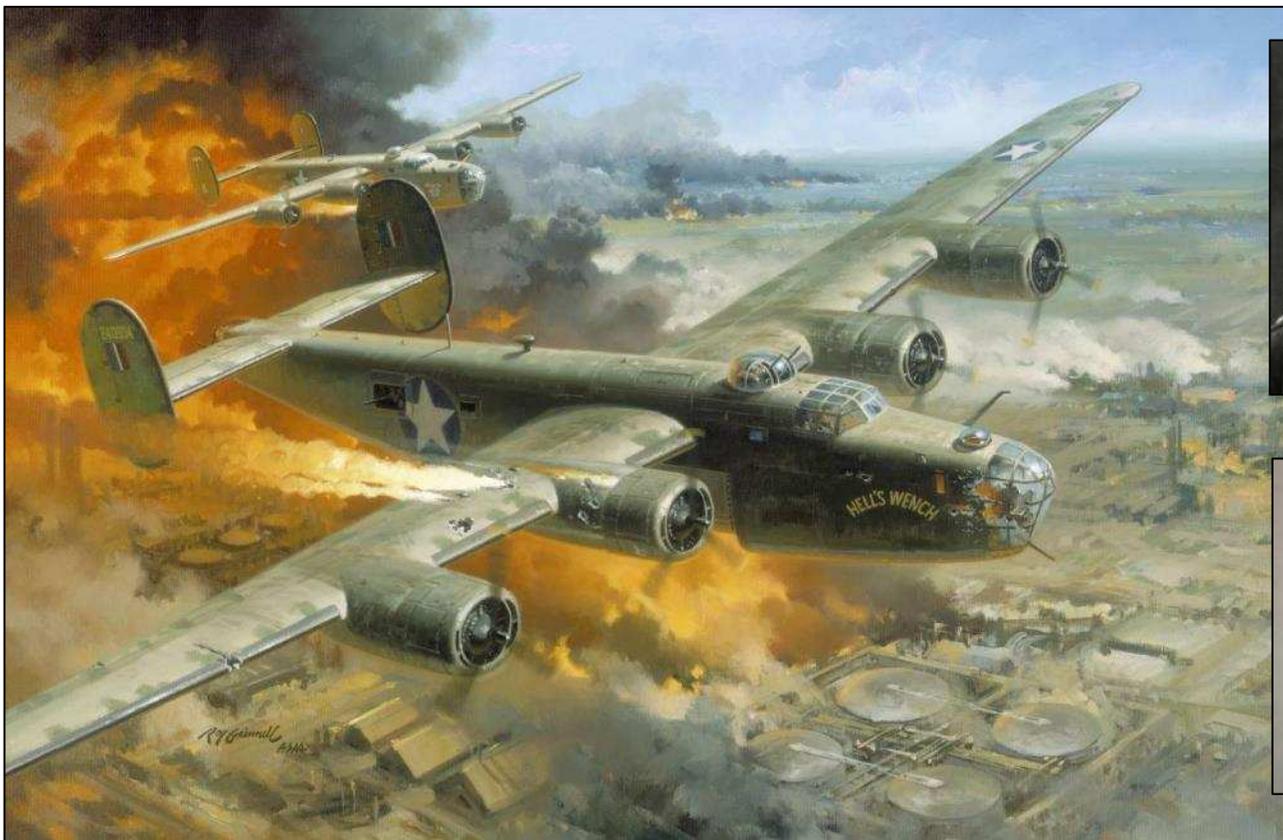
After crossing 500 miles of the Mediterranean, the Liberators had to climb to 10,000 ft. to clear the Pindus mountain range in Albania then descend to 100 ft. over the Romanian countryside – the prescribed altitude for the attack.



A number of talented aviation artists have created paintings depicting the Ploesti Raid including the above piece by Anthony Saunders. An abundance of books by historians and Ploesti veterans such as Robert Sternfels are available. Youtube has some great docs on the raid. Contact me at konartist@verizon.net for websites and books I've found about the Ploesti Raid.

A dispute over cruising speed between two BG commanders caused the attacking force to be spread out along a long line. The lead BG turned too soon at the wrong IP. This was corrected but resulted in aircraft approaching the target from two directions and off schedule. This doomed the mission. In addition, the Ploesti defenders were alerted to the approaching bombers by spotters and radar. A well-trained force of German gunners and Romanian/German pilots manning ME-109, ME-110 and other nimble fighter aircraft were ready and waiting.

The greatest air-ground battle in the history of warfare ensued. On the bombing run, B-24 crews saw haystacks open up with anti-aircraft guns blazing away. A flak train decimated a force of Liberators using the rail lines as a guide to target. Liberators spewing fuel from punctured tanks erupted in flames. Over the target, B-24 gunners unloaded their .50 cal guns at enemy positions – with some atop structures at nearly the same height as the bombers.



Lt. Col. Addison Baker



Maj. John Jerstad

By the time Lt. Col. Addison Baker and co-pilot Major. John Jerstad flying *Hell's Wench* were over the target, their B-24 was a flying inferno as seen in this painting by artist Roy Grinnell titled "Returning is Secondary."

Before the mission, Baker, leading the 93rd BG, the "Traveling Circus" had told his men "We're going on one of the biggest jobs of the war. If we hit it good, we might cut six months off the war. She may be a little rough, but you can do her. I'm going to take you to this one if my plane falls apart." He kept his promise.

After leading their men directly over the target, Baker and Jerstad tried to climb. *Hell's Wench* struggled to get up to 300 feet where crew members were seen jumping out in a desperate attempt to bail. Unable to maintain lift, the tangled wreckage of the Liberator fell over on its flaming right wing and crashed. None of the 10-member crew aboard *Hell's Wench* survived. For their sacrifice, Baker and Jerstad posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

En route to target, 2nd. Lt. Pete Hughes' bomber was raked with anti-aircraft fire. Holes in the left wing and bomb bay fuel tanks spewed a steady stream of aviation fuel behind his B-24 *Ole Kickapoo*.

Recognizing the danger, another crew broke radio silence to warn the young pilot from Texas to abort the bomb run. Despite the danger, Hughes bore in. His Liberator erupted in flames but he stayed on the bomb run and unloaded on target. He headed for a riverbed to make a belly landing but his wingtip caught the riverbank and his plane tumbled out of control into the ground. Only two crew members would survive the crash.

Eight months after he was killed in action, Hughes' Medal of Honor was presented to his wife Hazel. An A&M grad, Hughes medal is currently on display at Sanders Corps of Cadets Center on campus.



2nd. Lt. Hughes and the crew of *Ole Kickapoo*

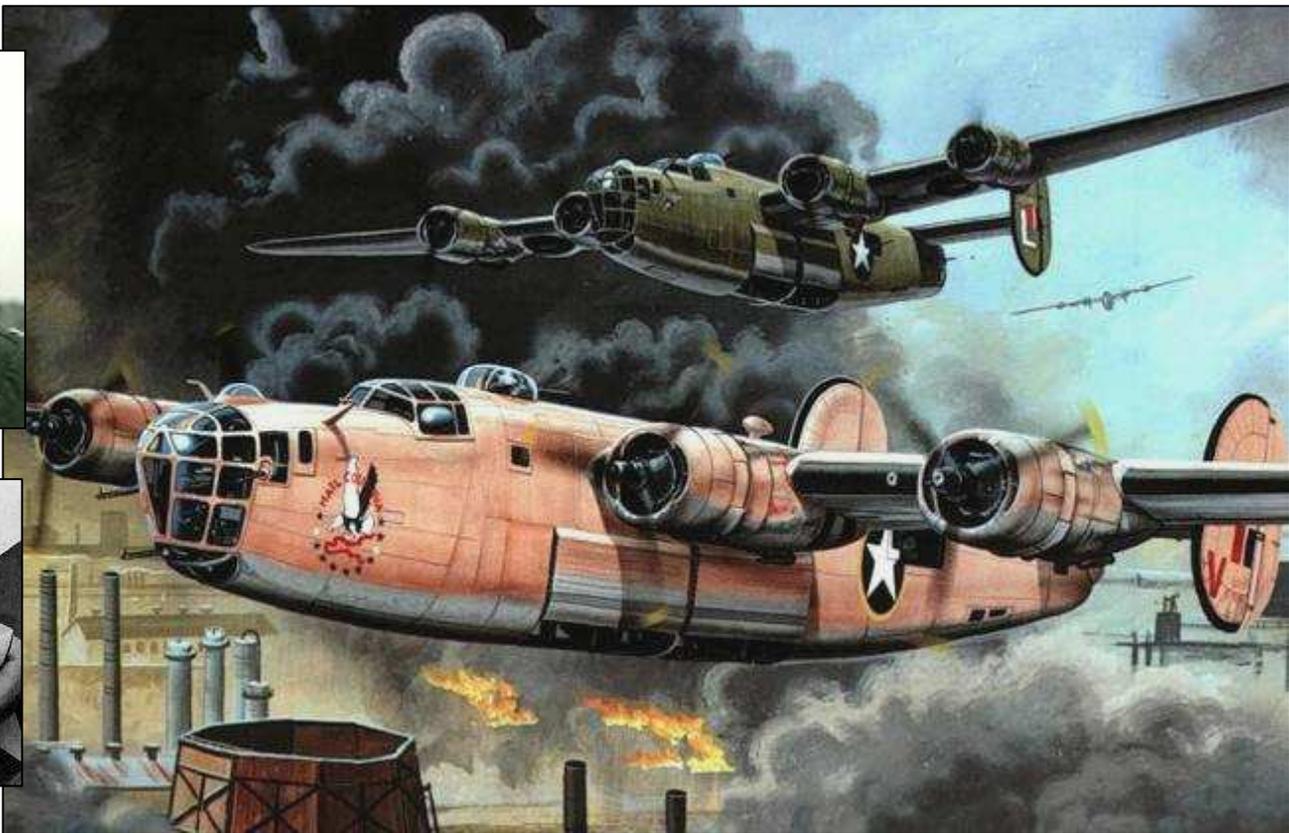




Col. Leon Johnson



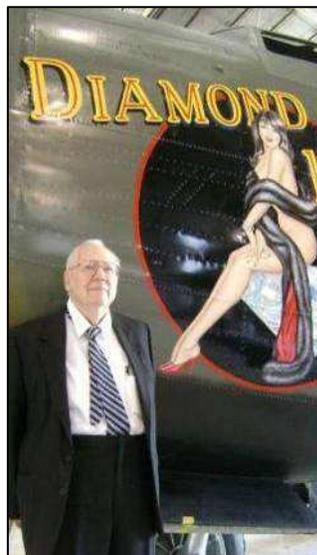
Col. John "Killer" Kane



Only two of the men selected to receive the Medal of Honor survived the mission. Col John "Killer" Kane commanding the 98th BG "The Pyramiders" and Col. Leon Johnson commanding the 44th BG "Eight Balls." Kane piloted the B-24 *Hail Columbia*. Johnson piloted the B-24 *Suzy Q*. Their aircraft are depicted in this painting by artist Don Greer. Before the mission, Kane told his men, "It would take an entire army a year to fight its way up here and smash this target. We are going to do it in a couple of minutes with less than two thousand men!" Kane's men fearlessly followed him to target and paid a heavy price. In one of Kane's last public statements before his death in 1996 he said, "I still recall the smoke, fire and B-24s going down like it was yesterday. Even now, I get a lump in my throat when I think about what we went through. I didn't get the Medal of Honor, the 98th BG did."

Only 88 B-24s returned to Libya of which 55 had battle damage. 44 aircraft were shot down by air defenses and enemy fighter aircraft. Other damaged B-24s were diverted to emergency airstrips including Kane's *Hail Columbia* which crash-landed in Cyprus. Several ditched in the Mediterranean. 310 airmen were killed. 108 were captured and 78 were interned in Turkey. Allied assessment of the attack estimated 40 percent of the target was destroyed with some refineries left untouched. Most of the damage was repaired and refining capacity resumed at or above the levels prior to the attack.

Ploesti remained a high value target with 19 more Allied bombing missions undertaken from 1943-44. The August 1, 1943 raid was the only low-level mission. Even at higher altitudes, flak and enemy fighters continued to take their toll on aircraft and men. The Ploesti Raid of August 1 continues to carry the distinction of the most Medal of Honor recipients for any air action in the history of the US Air Force. In addition, many airmen in the raid received the DSC and other special commendations.



CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron member, S/Sgt. Robert Phillips flew the last Ploesti mission.

Target Ploesti	No. of Aircraft	Bomb Tonnage	Aircraft Lost
August 1, 1943	179	1,275	55
April 5, 1944	230	587	13
April 15, 1944	137	316	3
April 24, 1944	290	793	8
May 5, 1944	485	1,257	19
May 6, 1944	135	329	6
May 18, 1944	206	493	14
May 31, 1944	481	1,116	16
June 6, 1944	310	698	14
June 23, 1944	139	283	6
June 24, 1944	135	329	14
July 9, 1944	222	605	6
July 15, 1944	607	1,526	20
July 22, 1944	495	1,334	24
July 28, 1944	349	913	20
July 31, 1944	154	435	2
August 10, 1944	414	952	16
August 17, 1944	248	534	15
August 18, 1944	377	825	7
August 19, 1944	65	144	—
Total	5,479	13,469	223



Editor's Corner

Rosie gets a Ride



Photos by Kon Kelley and Raymond Jeffcoat

Lisa Foster aka “Rosie the Riveter” officially joined our Squadron in June. Her sign-up bonus was a ride on the DFW Wing Stearman. While waiting for her ride, Lisa said she could barely keep “the butterflies in my stomach flying in formation.” Her pilot was Dave Siegert.

Panorama

A few years ago, I took the family to Yosemite. Al Benzing saw my pics on Facebook. As an airline pilot, Al said his only memories of the California Sierras were from the air. A few weeks ago, I was on a backpacking trip to a remote lake in the Sierras. Apollo Lake is at 10,600 ft. I saw airliners flying over and remembered that conversation with Al. My nephew and I figured out how to take panorama pics with the camera. We got some great stuff. Gotta try this at an air show!



THE FLYER WANTS YOU!

You are welcome to contribute a story, photographs and artwork for this decades-old newsletter. If you are a veteran, please tell us your story. Squadron members continually meet veterans at the hangar, on tour and in everyday life – let us know their stories. We’re also looking for contributors for “This Month in History” and news spotlighting our aircraft and members.

Thank you and
“Keep ‘Em Flying!”

Konley Kelley
THE FLYER editor
konartist@verizon.net





Photo by Rocky Smith

B-29 / B-24 Squadron

**Addison Airport
4730 George Haddaway Drive
Addison, Texas 75001
www.cafb29b24.org
972-387-2924 (Hangar)
432-413-4100 (Ride Desk)**