



Club Update

Diamond Lil Celebrates 75 Years of Flying History !!!

This year marks the 75th year of the vintage warbird, *Diamond Lil* ...and she continues to fly! She spent much of her life as a high speed transport, which allowed her to escape the chopping block in the mass scrappings following WWII. *Diamond Lil* was the 25th Liberator built, the 18th production B-24. It rolled off the production line as a fully equipped combat aircraft with bomb bays and gun positions in the nose, both waists, the tail, and a belly gun behind the bomb bays. The cost of the aircraft at that time was listed as \$258,074.67.

Along with an unusual military career, she has been through many conversions and has ended up in the Commemorative Air Force. In the late 1960's, the CAF was trying to build a bomber fleet. CAF Colonel Victor Agather, who had a business in Mexico City, was aware that the company Pemex had a B-24 they planned to scrap and replace with a DC-6. After a short negotiating period, the deal was made and the CAF obtained their B-24 in 1967. We are very proud and honored to operate this warbird today and use it to help share our Mission about the Greatest Generation! We will have a special celebration to honor

Diamond Lil's 75th Birthday at the Wings Over Dallas event in October, 2016, sponsored by the CAF, at the National Air Base in Dallas.

We are grateful to all of you who have joined the ***Diamond Lil Century Club*** as a supporting member. As you can imagine, it takes an inordinate amount of financial support to keep her flying in top condition. To date, we have raised \$42K with our goal being \$100K. We know this is a challenge, but we are continuing to seek support to reach our goal. When *Diamond Lil* is able to fly and sell rides, the revenue generated still is not enough to financially support the needs of the aircraft. **We still need your help!** If you have not joined the Century Club or renewed this year, for as little as \$100, or more, you can become a supporting member and help make a difference. **Remember: 100% of All Donations To This Campaign Go To The Aircraft and are Tax-Deductible.** Please visit www.DiamondLil.org to see the different levels of support and appreciation gifts.

Please Join Today! Help us support this National Treasure!

Toni Rabroker

Diamond Lil Century Club Chairwoman



Toni Rabroker with this issue's featured WWII veteran, James Walston, Jr.





From the Left Seat



Al Benzing

Diamond Lil will headline its own **Air Power History Tour** (APHT), with several other CAF aircraft beginning with Labor Day weekend. Plans are for a T-6 Texan, T-34 Mentor, PT-13 Stearman on all the Tour Stops. Additionally, a B-25 Mitchell, TBM Avenger and P-51 Mustang will join us for Branson. A B-17 is planned for Fayetteville, AR.

In the past, *Diamond Lil* would make airshow or tour appearances without accompanying aircraft, or in some case would be part the the APHT with *FIFI*.

Our 'New and Improved' APHT headlining *Diamond Lil* will be exciting!

Flight Ops will be busy during August as *Lil* takes to the sky after undergoing many improvements this year. Test flights and crew training are the first priorities. Crews will then begin the loading process for touring.

Thank you for supporting *Diamond Lil* during these exciting times!

Al Benzing
B-24 Go Team Leader



Diamond Lil APHT Fall Tour Dates

KBBG	Branson, MO	Sept	2 – 4
KMKO	Muskogee, OK	Sept	10 – 11
KFYV	Fayetteville, AR	Sept	22 – 24
KAFW	Alliance Airshow	Oct	15 – 16
KRBD	Dallas Air Expo	Oct	28 – 30
KNEW	New Orleans, LA	Nov	5 – 6

Photo by Scott Slocum

Diamond Lil 75th Anniversary 2016 CAF AirPower History Tour



Branson, MO
Sept. 2-4

Ride on B-24 Liberator
"Diamond Lil", a B-25
Mitchell, P-51 Mustang,
TBM Avenger, and more!

B-24 Liberator Diamond Lil

Americans built 18,482 B-24 Liberators between 1940-1945, the most produced aircraft in U.S. history. Today, Diamond Lil is one of only two B-24 Liberators still flying. Built in 1941, Diamond Lil is the oldest operational World War II four-engine bomber in the world.

B-25 Mitchell Show Me



P-51 Mustang Gunfighter



TBM Avenger

Branson Airport, Branson Jet Center, 130 Wright Brothers Road, Hollister, MO 65672

Friday, Sept. 2 * 2 pm to 5 pm

Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 3-4 * 9 am to 5 pm

Ramp access: \$15 Adults / \$5 Youth age 11-17

More info and book rides at:
www.AirPowerTour.org



Maintenance Update

Well – we’ve finally turned the corner! In the previous Century Club Maintenance updates, it was all about taking *Lil* apart and, I am now happy to say that she is going back together. Probably the biggest item on our “To-Do List” was the removal of the old sealant inside the fuel tanks. This was a very tedious and labor intensive job, but after completion and a visual inspection inside, the new sealant was applied and is in the process of curing. Crew Chief Rick then did a visual and eddy current test of the wing spar and we are happy to say it is “good to go”!

Other items include all new push rod seals, spark plugs, replacement of a lot of the ignition harness on all four engines, and setting the valves. On the *not so good* side, two cylinders were found that needed to be replaced. But, actually, that is not bad taking everything into consideration.



Lil's new Radio Operator station

The interior of the aircraft is coming together, and most importantly, we now have the radio operator station in place. With a big thank you to Don Obreiter, this is one of the items that will help in restoring *Diamond Lil* to her original configuration.

A special thanks to the many folks that have come out to volunteer their time, especially Ed Beck, Tom Ferraro, Jim Neill, Greg Hogue, and Tom Kaye, along with several others. We couldn't do it without these dedicated volunteers that have rallied around this great warbird!

If you are interested in helping out, please email me your name and telephone number to: rabroker@hotmail.com.

Steve Rabroker

Volunteer Maintenance Coordinator

We'd also like to pass along our thanks to WWII Veteran and B-24 air gunner, S/Sgt. Robert Phillips. Robert was featured in the March issue of the *Diamond Lil Century Club* newsletter. Robert made a generous donation towards the purchase of a Fender Event PA System. With this tech, the audio for events at the hangar with *Diamond Lil* will be much improved.

Robert celebrated his 92nd birthday on June 25. Happy Birthday sir!





B-24 Ground School 2016

Photos by Konley Kelley and Raymond Jeffcoat



April 23, 2016



TRAINING



FELLOWSHIP





Deputy PIO Report

Diamond Lil is only a few months away from kicking-off her Fall 2016 AirPower History Tour, thanks to the dedication of the volunteer maintenance team lead by Steve Rabroker, as well as the passionate efforts of the ***Diamond Lil Century Club***. When *Diamond Lil* returns to the air, she will celebrate her Diamond Anniversary and retain the title as the oldest flying four-engine World War II bomber in the world.

The Liberator was the most produced military aircraft in American history, a testimony to The Arsenal of Democracy. The men and women who built the aircraft and the crews who flew the Liberator in harm's way helped turn the tide of the Second World War. Thousands of articles and books have preserved the history of Liberator units and their missions, but we also have an opportunity to uncover forgotten memories. *Diamond Lil* and the Airpower History Tour connect the public to the men and women who created the Liberator legacy.

In 1994, twenty years before I joined the Commemorative Air Force B-29/B-24 Squadron, *The Dispatch* published a feature story about B-24 Liberator *Lil Abner* and Operation Tidal Wave, the 1943 mission by one hundred and seventy nine B-24 Liberators to destroy the oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania. World War II history buffs know that only ninety-nine Liberators returned to their bases after the 18-hour, 2,400 mile round-trip mission. *Lil Abner*, piloted by Lt. Worden Weaver from Theodore, Alabama, was heavily damaged during the attack and crash landed in Romania.



Lt. Worden Weaver survived the forced landing and spent a year as a POW. After the war, Weaver married, raised a family and served twenty years in the United States Air Force, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in 1963. Weaver went on to a second career as a university history professor where my future wife (and CAF Colonel) Cindy and I met him as undergraduate students. Professor Weaver passed away in 2008, however I still remember his patience, humility, tweed jacket and smoking pipe.

Lil Abner crew, Lt. Worden Weaver is standing, 2nd from the left.

Diamond Lil is my connection to Worden Weaver and the men of Operational Tidal Wave.

Blue Skies,

Col Chris Madrid

B-29/B-24 Squadron Deputy PIO

#27767



Liberators in History

Ploesti

Fortunes of war prevented a daring raid from crippling German oil supplies

by Bob Worley

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August 1, 1943; 0400: The Libyan sun was beginning to break in the east; the B-24 named *Lil' Abner* roared down the runway at Benghazi loaded with 1,000 and 2,000 pound bombs.

Operation "Tidal Wave," the most highly decorated military mission in U.S. history, was under way with five men on a course to earn Medals of Honor. One hundred seventy nine B-24s were taking off on an 18-hour, 2,400 mile round-trip mission to destroy the largest Nazi-held refineries, located in Ploesti, Rumania.

Flying on *Teggie Anne*, Brigadier General Uzal G. Ent, one of the original planners of Operation Tidal Wave, felt he had a well conceived, innovative plan — a low level bombing sweep over Ploesti which, if executed as planned, would devastate the Rumanian refinery complex.

The two veteran bomb groups of the Ninth Air Force, the 376th and 98th, were reinforced for the mission by the 93rd, 44th and 389th Bomb Groups, on loan from the Eighth Air Force. The 389th crews were considered to be "rookies."

Virtually all five groups were in the air by 0500, even though three groups were delayed at takeoff due to the dust stirred up by the mass of planes taking off on an unpaved runway. The ground crews, who had awakened much earlier to perform their tasks, watched their planes with awe. In this initial stage, one catastrophe occurred, foreshadowing the terror that lay ahead. *Kickapoo*, belonging to the 98th BG, experienced engine failure on takeoff and crashed into a telephone pole while attempting a blind landing amongst the dust. The rest of the 1,726 American men that took off that bright, hot August morning started off well, carrying a combined load of demolition bombs in excess of 300 tons. They were prepared to wreak havoc on the enemy, if all went well.

As the last of the planes cleared Benghazi air space and formed up high over the Libyan desert, they turned north and headed to what would later be referred to as "Hell over Ploesti."

Over the Mediterranean

The weather was perfect as the air fleet cruised the Mediterranean. The groups had little difficulty maintaining visual contact as they flew at an altitude of 2,000 to 3,000 feet.

Flying in *Lil' Abner*, Lt. Walter Sorenson, was operating as navigator for the Liberator piloted by Worden Weaver. Sorenson knew that this



One of the most iconic picture of WWII. *Sandman*, piloted by 1st. Lt. Robert Sternfels appears moments after clearing a towering cloud of smoke.



Lt. Worden Weaver

would be a day for the history books. If the raid was successful, it would be hailed as a brilliant idea. However, if unsuccessful, it could go down as one of the U.S. Army Air Force's biggest blunders.

Lil' Abner carried more than two tons of bombs, many with hour-long delayed fuses. Included among its ordnance were 300 pounds of incendiary explosive sticks that were to be hand-thrown by the gunners to start fires on the target area.

The crews of the large planes had undergone intense training for several weeks for this first-ever, low level, coordinated, daylight raid. They would be blasting the oil refinery at altitudes ranging from 30 to 100 feet above the ground while traveling at speeds of 225 miles an hour. The new Norden bomb sights would be of no use on this type of raid.

"When you are that low to the ground, you can really tell how fast you are traveling," Sorenson said recalling the mission. "If you are a few thousand feet high, it is difficult to tell how much you are really moving," he added.

Things Begin to Go Wrong

After three hours of flight, the armada of aircraft came within sight of Corfu Island in the Ionian Sea, off the coast of Albania. To this point, the mission had been running as planned. However, beginning the climb to 10,000 feet, the wings of *Wongo Wongo*, the lead B-24, started wobbling. Suddenly the aircraft went out of control and plunged into the sea, exploding and sinking immediately, taking with it the entire crew, including one of only two navigators to receive special briefings on the mission.

In an effort to look for survivors, the deputy lead plane flying in the number two position, dropped out of formation. Not able to regain altitude, the overloaded plane was forced to turn back to base taking home the only other navigator to receive a special briefing.

The climb also proved to be an obstacle for 12 other planes that were forced to abort because of mechanical problems, such as engine failure or fuel leaks. For those who remained to face the dangers ahead, the only respite from tension and boredom was the passing out of tasteless cold prepacked lunches and the bittersweet wisecracks on the inter-ship communications.

Trained to react to the situation, Lt. John Palm, flying *Brewery Wagon*, moved from his number three position, into the lead position. Col. Keith Compton, the group commander and leader of the 376th, slid from his number five position to the number two or deputy lead position.

As the planes finally reached land, a potential problem arose. The flyers spotted a front of huge cumulus clouds, reaching from below the 9,000 foot peaks of the Pindis Mountains up to 17,000 feet. Not able to break silence to discuss options with the other leaders, Compton, leading the 376th BG, began a steep climb with Col. Edward Baker of the 93rd BC following over the top.

By the time the three trailing groups had reached the cumulus clouds, Compton and Baker were out of sight. Unsure of how the other formations had confronted the obstacle, the trailing groups, including Col. John R. "Killer" Kane's 98th BG and Col. Leon Johnson's 44th BG, chose to utilize USAAF standard procedures, and basically flew through the clouds at 12,000 feet to avoid the hidden peaks.

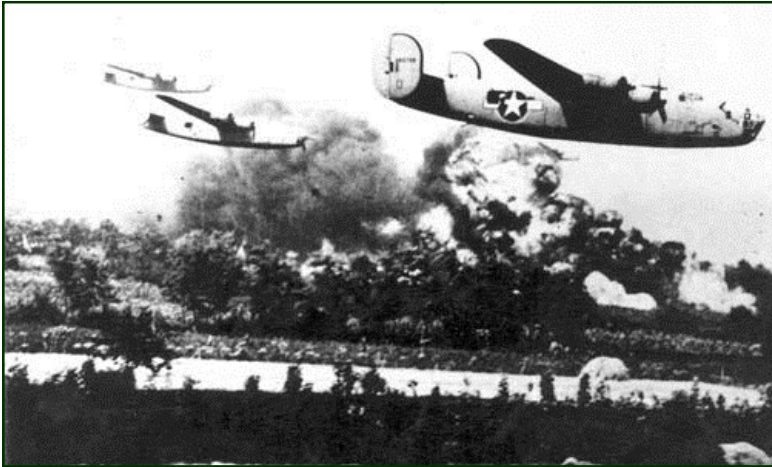
Although the clouds were an unforeseen hurdle and depleted the fuel of the attacking B-24s, they would prove to be the cause of a more serious problem. The flights, now divided into two packets, were separated. The first packet, made up of the 376th and the 93rd, were now 60 miles ahead of the other three groups — neither knowing where the others were.

Taking over as lead navigator, Lt. William Wright, who was flying on *Brewery Wagon*, led the first group to Loin, a small town just south of the border between Bulgaria and Rumania. The planes remaining from the other three groups were 15 minutes behind the lead group.

A Wrong Turn

As the flight of bombers continued, another mishap would occur. Flying in *Tegge Ann*, Col. Compton and General Ent, would turn early leading 58 B-24s of the 376th and 93rd BGs to the city of Bucharest, 35 miles south of Ploesti.

Lt. Palm, in the lead B-24, recognized the error first, and turned, alone, towards Ploesti. Finally realizing their error, Compton and Ent broke radio silence and verified that a mistake had been made. With a sharp turn to the left, the 376th and 93rd bombers were back on course, heading north to their target. Arriving at the south edge of Ploesti, the formation was met by heavy flak as they prepared to start their bombing run.



Again Ent initiated a change in plans. In hopes of avoiding the defender's gunfire, he ordered Compton to skirt around the eastern part of town and to come in from the north. Following this order, Ent went on the air releasing all pilots from the planned discipline, allowing them to bomb "targets of opportunity." This order subsequently would cause chaos, as the 376th would bomb targets assigned to Kane and Johnson.

Col. Kane, leading the 98th BG, and followed by the 44th and 389th, failed to find the two lead groups after being separated in the flight over the mountains. After searching for them over the Danube for a few minutes, he turned toward Ploesti.

"We knew we had gotten separated from the other group because we should have been able to see each other," said Sorenson, whose *Lil' Abner* was with Kane's packet. "We were so confused at this point that some of our planes flew as far off course as to reach Bucharest before returning to a correct course. We missed our IPs, and the villages that were supposed to be landmarks were just a wide place in the roads," Sorenson added.

Despite the terrible confusion, an improvised attack was delivered on Ploesti, between 1150 and 1200 hours, at altitudes ranging from 30 to 100 feet. The planes were so low, they had to gain altitude to miss some roof tops. They ran head-long into heavy flak and were taking many direct hits. Although the 376th dropped most of their bombs in the general target area, only a small part of them hit assigned targets.

"We thought they were haystacks"

"While all this confusion was going on we were encountering the heaviest flak and small-arms fire we had ever seen. We were being shot at by what we thought were haystacks. Planes were going down right and left. Our plane was hit and caught fire," Sorenson said.

Lil' Abner came out of the attack with three engines shut down, and most of her controls shot away. Weaver kept the plane in the air for 40 miles after the bomb run. He crash-landed as his wing tipped the ground and skidded to a stop. The nose was rolled under the belly of the ship.

William Schettler, the flight engineer from Coquilla, Ore., was crushed to death under the fallen top turret. The wrecked plane started to burn. Six men escaped the carnage by scrambling out of the back of the plane. Both pilots and Sorenson, the navigator, were imprisoned in the cockpit. Weaver knocked a hole in the windshield

large enough to climb through. Sorenson attempted to follow but got tangled up with his parachute harness and was stuck half-in and half-out of the hole. Robert Snyder, the co-pilot from Oakland, Calif., was trapped behind Sorenson as flames moved toward them.

The bombardier, Lloyd Reese, from Columbus, Ohio, fought his way through the flames to cut Sorenson's harness while others pulled him to safety. Snyder followed close behind.

"A German fighter plane kept circling over our wrecked plane. I guess he was reporting our position. We all ran to a nearby farm house where some women treated our burns as best they could before enemy troops showed up and took us away," Sorenson said.

Sorenson was a captive from Aug. 1, 1943, to Aug. 31, 1944, and spent eight months being treated for his burns in a German hospital.

Uncommon Valor

The Ploesti raid was an act of courage for all the men who participated, but five particular individuals were awarded the Medal of Honor. In addition to Kane and Johnson who survived, three other officers were awarded the Medal of Honor for heroic action that took their lives — Col. Addison Baker of Akron, Ohio, and Maj. John Jerstad from Racine, Wis., who flew in the same plane, *Hell's Wench*, and 2nd Lt. Lloyd Hughes from Refugio, Texas.

At the height of the raid, Hughes's plane was shot up and was streaming fuel from the left wing. The leak was so heavy that it was blinding his waist gunner's view. Hughes continued to hold his plane in formation at 30 feet, knowing full well that if he didn't pull up he would be flying through walls of fire with gas spraying from his wing. He flew straight through the walls of fire and dropped his bomb load on target. When he had flown through the holocaust, his left wing was a ball of flames.



Hughes attempted to pull up and away from the action, trying to save his plane and crew. He successfully slowed the plane's speed from 225 to 100 miles an hour. It looked as if he was going to be able to crash land when suddenly the left wing flew off and the plane cartwheeled into the ground. All in the plane were killed.

Baker and Jerstad's Medal of Honor were earned while leading their groups into battle. Baker's *Hell's Wench* had early in the attack struck a balloon cable. The plane had severed the cable and the balloon drifted away before the plane took a direct hit in the nose section. Seriously damaged, fire spread through the ship. Baker was forced to jettison his bomb load to stay in the air and continue to lead his formation.

The plane was in flames for well over three minutes and still Baker led his group to their assigned targets, incredibly maneuvering between groups of 50-foot tall smokestacks.

After successfully leading his formation to their target, *Hell's Wench*, took another hit from an 88 shell. Baker, trying to escape Ploesti, hauled back on the controls of *Hell's Wench* and fought for altitude. Needing to reach at least 500 feet to allow the crew to bail out, *Hell's Wench* finally fell off on her right wing and crashed, taking the entire crew to its death.

Upon arriving at their assigned targets, Col. Johnson, leading the 44th BG, and Col. Kane, leading the 98th BG, were dismayed to discover that an attack had already been initiated. Facing a tough decision, both commanders continued their bomb runs into the smoke and fire, not knowing what they would be flying into, or what would be awaiting them.

It would have been highly justifiable for either man to abort the mission, but both continued the bomb run, with the possibility of hidden chimneys, barrage cables, and not knowing how many 45 second delayed action bombs would be under them. The two men were awarded the Medal of Honor for their decision to continue their assigned mission despite the horrendous possibilities.

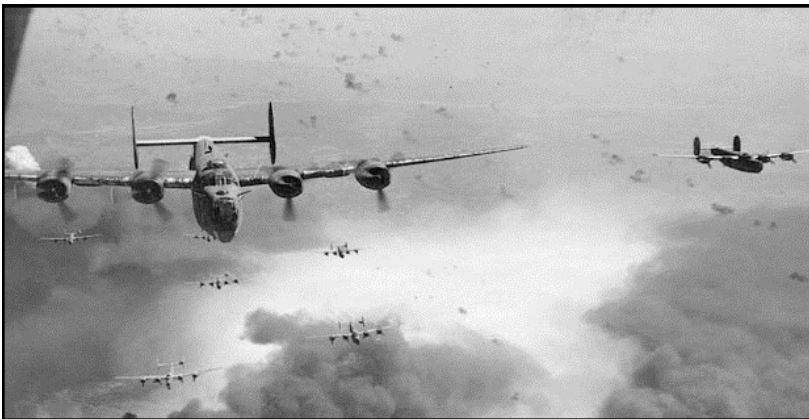
A Heavy Price to Pay

Of the 179 B-24s which began the mission, 165 attacked Ploesti or another target, 33 were lost to anti-aircraft fire and ten were shot down by Axis fighters. Twenty-three aircraft were forced down in Turkey or at other auxiliary fields, while 99 returned to base, but of these returning, 58 had heavy combat damage.

The results of these sacrifices were that the two targets attacked as planned (Blue 1 and Red 1) were put out of commission for the rest of the war. Two (White 4 and White 5) were knocked out of production for about six months, and White 2 lost about 40 percent of its capacity, but remained in production. Two targets, White 1 and White 3 received only light damage.

War is full of what ifs. What if the groups had not been separated by the weather over Albania? What if the lead groups had not made a wrong turn at Targoviste? Some historians note that if the Tidal Wave mission had gone as planned, as much as 90 percent of the Ploesti complex would have been destroyed or severely crippled.

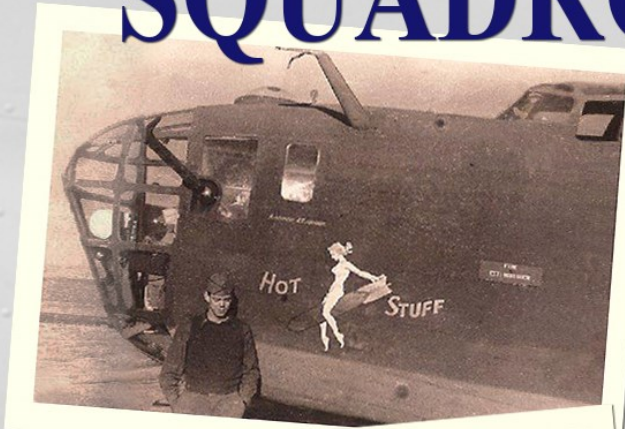
The final series of attacks on Ploesti began in May 1944, led by the Fifteenth Air Force, based in Italy. Attacks by 500 to over 700 bombers continued, including RAF night raids, until Aug. 24, 1944, when Rumania surrendered. A few days later, Soviet ground troops entered the ruins of Ploesti.



<i>Target Ploesti</i>	<i>No. of Aircraft</i>	<i>Bomb Tonnage</i>	<i>Aircraft Lost</i>
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

SQUADRON EVENT

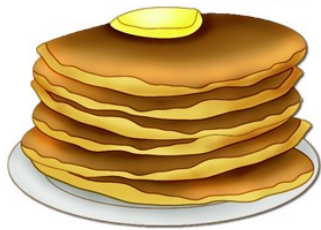
Before the BELLE



On May 3, 1943, a lone B-24 named *Hot Stuff* crashed on a mountainside in Iceland. On February 7, 1943, she and her crew had become the first 8th AF heavy bomber to complete 25 combat missions, a full 3 1/2 months before the *Memphis Belle*. *Hot Stuff* never made it home and she was lost to history...until now.

The CAF and B-29/B-24 Squadron are proud to welcome Before the Belle authors, Cassius Mullen and Betty Bryon to CAF HQ at Dallas Executive Airport for a special seminar and book-signing. Also attending is Jim Lux, the driving force behind bringing forward the story of *Hot Stuff* and Lt. General Frank Andrews, who also tragically died in the crash. Andrews was the commander of all U.S. forces in the European theater. His death reset Allied leadership for the course of the war under General Eisenhower. Jim is raising money for a memorial to the crew and passengers of *Hot Stuff* at the crash site in Iceland.

July 16, 2016



Pancakes at 8:00 a.m.

Seminar, Q&A, Book Signing at 9:30 a.m.

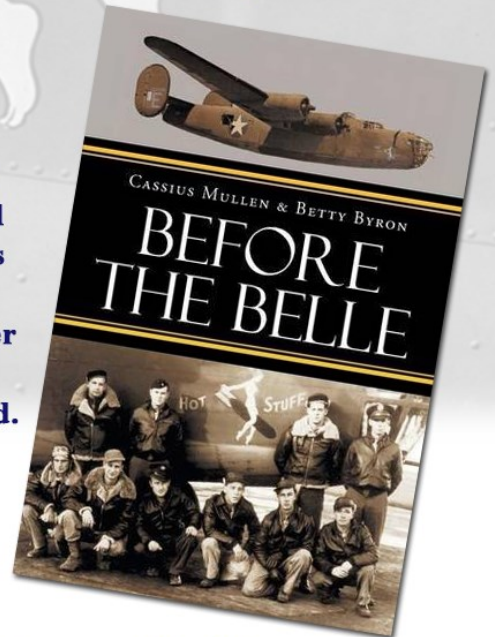
Books will be available for purchase

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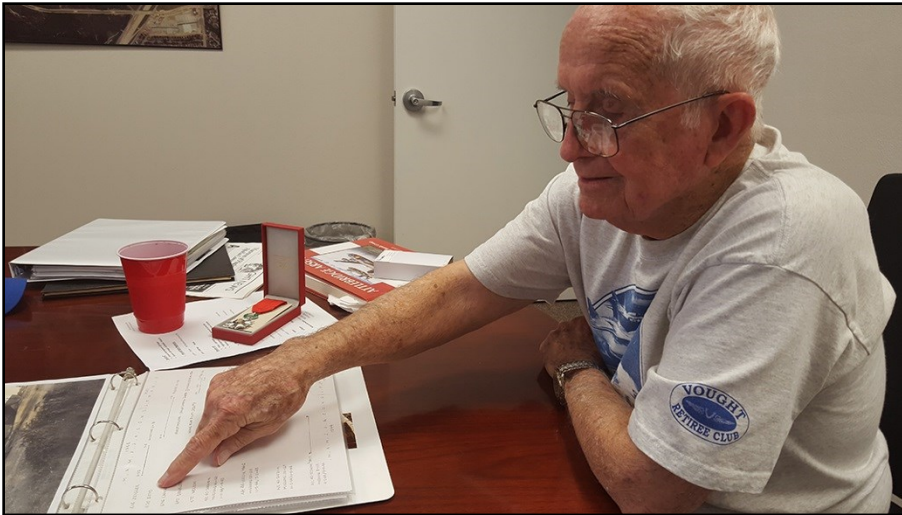


Liberator Legacy: B-24 Veteran's Story

Sgt. James Walston, Jr.

By Konley Kelley

I met James at B-24 Ground School in April. He has been a regular assisting with *Diamond Lil* restoration efforts. You definitely could not ask for a more experienced helping hand. James was an Assistant Crew Chief for a B-24 Liberator named *Laden Maid* in WWII.

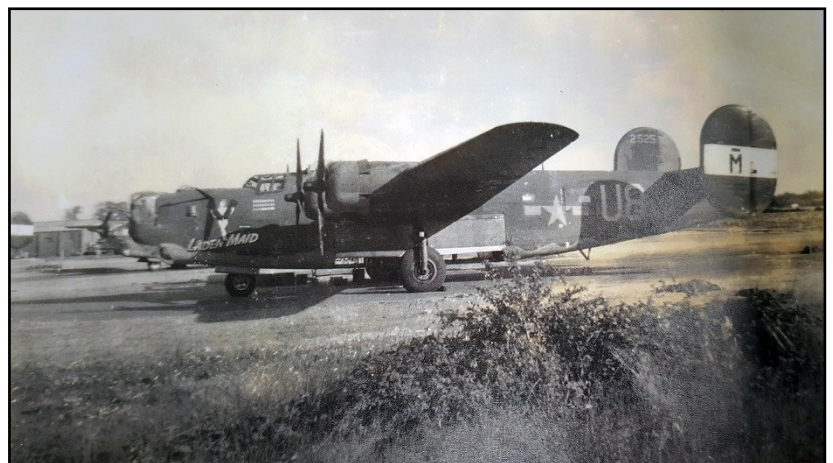


James had a photo album complete with pictures, documents and memorabilia collected over a lifetime. He is extremely proud to be given the Medal of Honor from the French Legion at their consulate in April in 2015. He is now a Knight in the French Order. The medal recognized his service maintaining combat-ready B-24s in the 466th BG / 8th AF which took the war to the enemy and helped liberate France.

Laden Maid was the nose art and name for several B-24s including a B-24J B-24L/M variant.

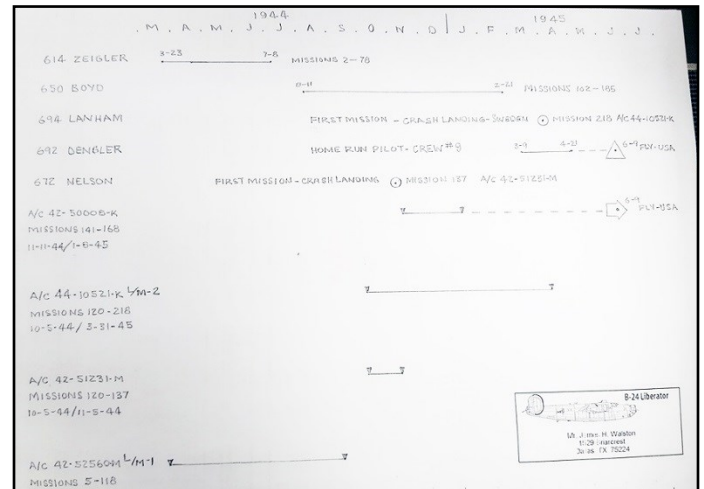
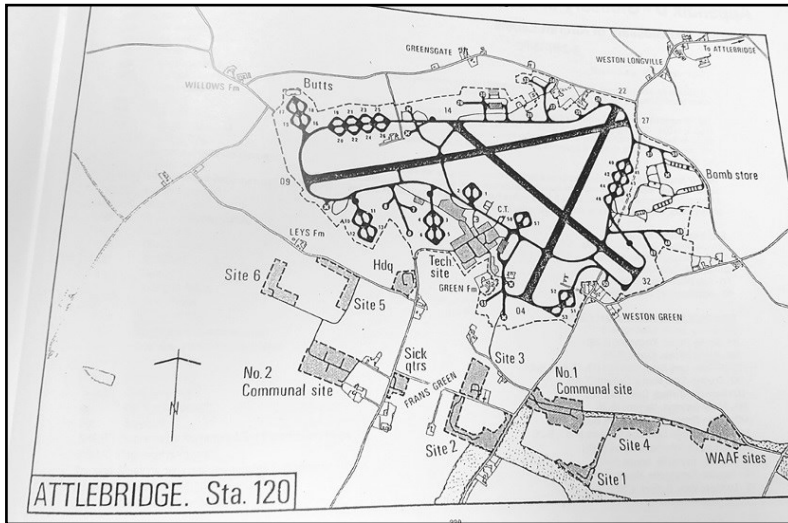
On April 21, 1945, *Laden Maid* and other 466th B-24s led a bombing mission to Salzburg,

Austria to disrupt supply lines to Nazis making a last stand in the Alps. A B-24, *Black Cat*, was shot down by flak and became the last bomber lost to enemy action over Germany. Jim was friends with the *Black Cat's* crew. The members of the 466th petitioned the USPS to release a stamp honoring the *Black Cat* crew. The stamp was released in 2005. *Diamond Lil* was at the *Black Cat* stamp ceremony at Oshkosh in 2005.



James' Crew Chief was D.P. Miller from Long Island, NY. He was a no nonsense mechanic who went wherever he was needed to fix planes – including forward combat positions.

Laden Maid was based at Attlebridge Station 120 near Norwich, England. James was based there from March, 1944 to June, 1945. He kept meticulous notes of his wartime experience and drafted a timeline of the service records for the aircraft he maintained on the base. It was hard work maintaining mission-ready Liberators. The 466th first combat mission was a daylight bombing raid of Berlin in March, 1944. He clearly recalls other notable missions including the largest 8th AF sortie (2,000+ aircraft) of the war on December 24, 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge. *Diamond Lil* crossed the Atlantic to make a fly over at the 466th BG Memorial Dedication Ceremony on June 12, 1992 at Attlebridge Station 120.



James was born in Italy, TX in 1923. His Dad was an airplane mechanic in WWI. His Mom was a homemaker. James has two sisters – one older and one younger. He played football for the Italy High School team. As a youth during study hall time, he'd scour airplane magazines. He was also fascinated by his Dad's pics and mementos from WWI.

After high school, he attended a technical school in Ft. Worth, TX and learned aviation mechanics. As the war was getting underway, James went to Vernon Victory Field to work on PT-19 primary trainers. The daily routine started by going to a big room with log books for each aircraft. James would check for the needs of each plane and do the job – whether the task was routine or repair. On December 7, 1942, he enlisted in the USAAF.

James was sent to Sheppard Field to continue his maintenance training then on to England on the troop ship RMS Queen Mary known by many in wartime as the *Grey Ghost*.

Many days on the base were the same with James and the crew preparing *Laden Maid* for missions. Some days you don't forget like the day James witnessed a B-24 crash on take-off. He was one of the first to the crash site. He recalls finding human remains and it continued to bother him long afterwards. On a brighter note, he was sometimes assigned to security duties on the base. He enjoyed this duty (much better than KP).



James' boyhood home



This page sponsored by the *Italy Ex-Student Association*

Most of his time was spent working on the aircraft through the night and morning until after the crew briefing. When the crew arrived to board the plane, James would make sure everything was flight-ready then get breakfast. If something happened and a B-24 did not return from a mission, the chaplain would come see the maintenance crew. This was always on James' mind.

After the war, he returned home to marry his sweetheart, Glenna. They met at Cliff Temple Baptist Church and settled down in Oak Cliff, TX. James finished college at Texas A&M in 1951. He was hired by Vought as a test lab engineer and worked there 37 years. His team was one of the first to work on the F7U-3. When he retired at 65 years old in 1988, he was working on the F7U-3 and B-2 Stealth Bomber intermediate wing structure test program.



1946 Globeswift

Just prior to starting at Vought, James worked briefly for Temco. He worked on the Temco/Globe Swift, a two-seat sport monoplane. It was interesting because well-known aces from WWII were hired to be pitchmen for the Globe Swift.

After retirement, James returned to Vought as a volunteer on restoration projects. Ironically he was back working on the restoration of a F7U-3. He also put time in on the Vought O3U-3 Seaplane.

James and Glenna had two boys, Ron and Dan and a girl, Diann. They raised their family in Oak Cliff. Ron is in sales for a company in Irving. He married and gave James four grandkids. Ron also earned his pilot's license.

Dan works in insurance and has two kids and a grandchild.

Diann has a son and works as a schoolteacher.

James met Keegan Chetwynd when Keegan made a presentation to the Vought retirees. This led to James visiting and joining our CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron and our dedicated volunteers working on *Diamond Lil*. He is especially fond of the "very nice" Steve and Toni Rabroker.

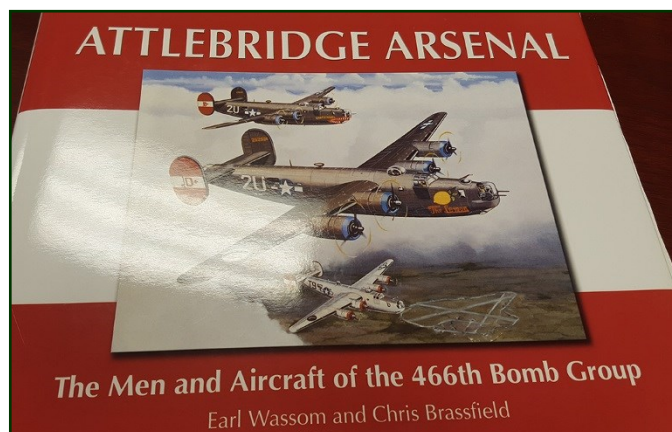


F7U-3 Cutlass

As long as he is able, he is going to keep volunteering to help with *Diamond Lil* and our maintenance team at DEA. He is also going to keep volunteering at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

James also shared with me a book on the 466th, Attlebridge Arsenal. It looks like a great book chronicling the history of the BG. Definitely recommended reading and for your military book collection.

Go meet James and work alongside him on *Diamond Lil*. Ask him what it was like working on a combat B-24 during the war and seeing hundreds of B-24s on the tarmac and taking to the air for missions over enemy territory. We'll never see that again but maybe James can give you a taste of what it was like from his memories.



James' medals and patches in his scrapbook

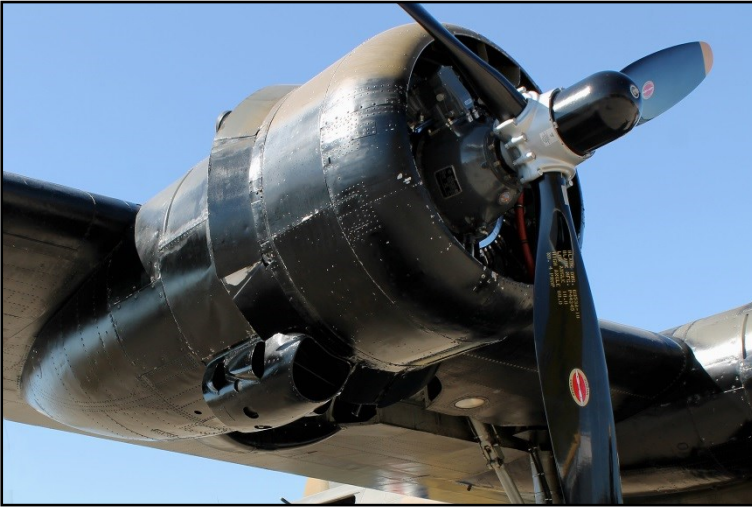




Diamond Lil Trivia

This issue's Trivia Question:

QUESTION: *Diamond Lil* is powered by four Pratt & Whitney R-1830 engines. How many total cylinders are there?



Last issue's Trivia Question:

What does the American flag on the starboard side of *Diamond Lil*'s nose represent?

ANSWER: Neutrality flag.



Early 1941 B-24A Liberator



*Lil's neutrality flag painted by
Crew Chief, Rick Garvis*

A 48-star neutrality flag is painted on *Diamond Lil*'s nose. Our B-24A Liberator was built before the US entered the war. The neutrality flag symbolized the non-war footing of the US at this time. Flags on aircraft like a B-24 were painted on both sides of the nose and the spine.

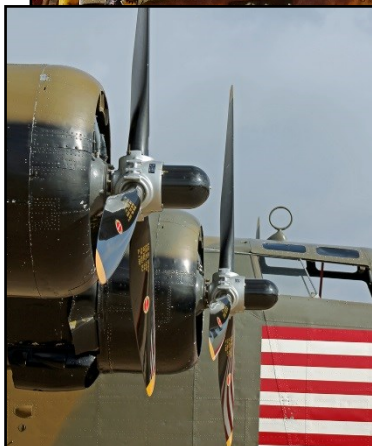
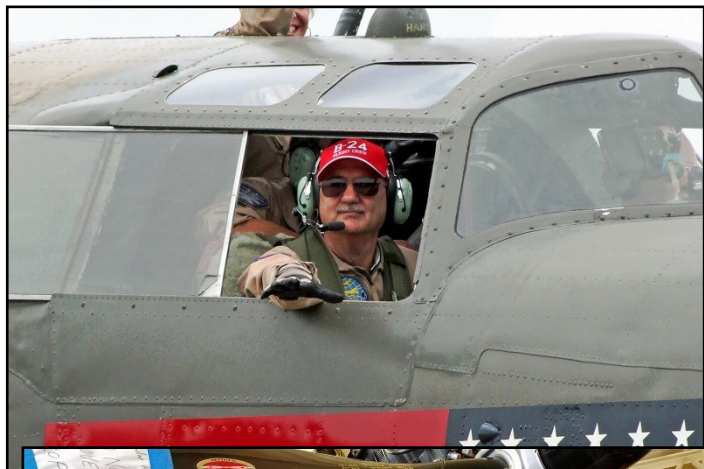
Please reply with your answer to: B24DiamondLil@gmail.com. The first five people to answer correctly will be recognized in our next quarterly email!

If you have a Trivia Question that you think not many people know and would like to share, please submit this as a separate email.



Diamond Lil Photo Gallery

Featured photographer, David O'Connor





Contact Us

What is your personal connection to *Diamond Lil*? Did you become a ***Diamond Lil* Century Club** Member to honor the service of a family member? Are you a veteran? Are you an aviator or A&P? Are you a military history buff? Did you ride on *Lil* at a tour stop and take a picture with her nose art? What can we do to tell your individual stories in our newsletter?



Photo by Rod Reilly

Please contribute to this newsletter. We are eager to publish stories from our membership and showcase your pictures. Your stories remind us of why we keep *Diamond Lil* flying and what makes this B-24A Liberator so unique and special to so many.

***Diamond Lil* Century Club**

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Dallas, Texas 75237

B24DiamondLil@hotmail.com

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PS: If you know of anyone that would be interested in helping to preserve this historic B-24, *Diamond Lil*, please forward this newsletter and direct them to our website.



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