

DIAMOND LIL

MEMBER



NEWSLETTER

Volume I Issue 2 December 2015

Club Update

Diamond Lil “Playing Hostess” While Under Maintenance & Restoration

Diamond Lil arrived at her new home at the CAF National Air Base at Dallas Executive Airport in June to begin the long awaited maintenance and restoration period. It’s been a bit challenging like any move to a new location.

The hangar is in need of some restoration itself. More planes and giant crates have been moved into this one hangar. Even though there have been some delays out of our control, the restoration team remains excited and energized to move forward.

Since Diamond Lil has been down for maintenance and restoration.....

On August 15th, the CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron celebrated the “70th Anniversary of the End of WWII” in conjunction with the Spirit of ’45 organization. All



Toni at the 380th BG reunion

across the country that day, planes were flying and people were celebrating the remembrance of the very day that victory was announced... the war was over! There were over 250 in attendance and special guest speaker was Col. Dick Cole (now age 100), who was Jimmy Doolittle’s co-pilot on the famous Doolittle Raid.



Toni Rabroker and Dick Cole at 70th Anniversary of the end of WWII event.

On October 16th the **380th Bomb Group, 5th Air Force - Royal Australian Air Force**, known as “The Flying Circus” or “King of the Heavies”, had a ceremonial reunion in front of *Lil*. The presence of the B-24 brought an outpouring of emotions and stories from some of our American Heroes. There were five WWII B24 veterans that were able to come and they said that this was the “highlight of their trip”! Read more about the 380th Bomb Group in the *B-24 Liberator Unit Profile* section of the newsletter.

This past summer at the Airshow in Reading, PA, I had the opportunity while crewing with *Diamond Lil* to meet a very special lady, Anne Aubry Marek, whose father was a B24 pilot with the 493rd BG, based in Debach, England. As it turned out, being June 6th, 2015, it was 71 years later to the day that her dad flew his first mission over German occupied France.

Anne said “it was emotionally overwhelming to me and a memory that I will cherish and relive many times to come”. Read more in *Liberator Legacy: B-24 Veterans’ Stories* section.

We currently have **160** dedicated Members that have joined in supporting Diamond Lil through the Century Club. Total funds raised to date are **\$51,800**, which is just over what we originally stated was needed as a minimum goal for this year. Some of the first projects have gotten underway, such as avionics upgrades and the fuel tank work is currently in process. In conjunction with the Squadron Finance Officer, the marketing team has been working hard to establish what will be needed for Diamond Lil in 2016. Please see more about this in the new section “From the Left Seat”.

We are also excited to announce a national fundraising effort launched December 1st by the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) Headquarters. *12 Planes of Christmas* is a first ever CAF online giving campaign that will directly benefit unit fundraising efforts. The campaign highlights 12 specific planes, as well as other projects, and will run through the month of December. *Diamond Lil* was selected as one of the 12 featured aircraft, positioning the aircraft to be introduced to a worldwide audience. See page 5 for more information about *12 Planes of Christmas*.

With the holidays fast approaching, please consider a gift that will help keep the legacy of *Diamond Lil* - the “oldest WWII four engine piston driven bomber” flying. Instead of trying to find a gift for that special friend, your dad, grandfather, brother, or sister, that just might sit in a drawer all year long or never get used, **your tax-deductible gift** in the name of the one you care about will help keep this rare aircraft flying, touching lives and educating our youth. You can give Diamond Lil some Holiday Cheer by renewing your Century Club Membership for 2016 or by giving a DLCC Membership as a gift at: www.DiamondLil.org.

Remember: 100% OF ALL DONATIONS TO THIS CAMPAIGN GO TO THE AIRCRAFT.

Again, I would like to THANK all of you that have joined the ***Diamond Lil Century Club*** and we look forward to more exciting things for *Diamond Lil* in the future.

Toni Rabroker

Diamond Lil Century Club Chairwoman

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 – www.DiamondLil.org.



Photo by Kevin Hong



From the Left Seat



Al Benzing

We strive to keep you up-to-date on *Diamond Lil*'s progress and events, and love to share our passion and plans!

Toni and Steve Rabroker have provided information on events and maintenance, so my focus for this issue is on general planning for 2016 touring, once we've completed the many restoration tasks.

We look at the calendar with nearly half the restoration period behind us and much remains to be done. We are looking toward ramping up activity so we can accomplish the necessary items – and some much needed improvements.

Dallas Executive has been doing pretty well on construction phase schedules, so we are anticipating July 1st as a date we could begin flying. Still, there is some uncertainty as to the actual date they will reopen the runways at a suitable length for B-24 operations.

With the above factors in mind, and the desire to keep *Lil* close to home for a few months after restoration to work out any bugs, tour planning is focusing on the later part of the season.

In the past *Diamond Lil* has accompanied our B-29 *FIFI* at some tour stops. While this can be viable, it isn't always practical or even desired. The general plan is to keep *Lil* within 500 miles of Dallas, except for some special Airshows. This helps build our brand in the area and makes more financial sense for this time period.

Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana will be a focus for September and October. We may also include Branson, MO and stops such as Little Rock, Fayetteville, Houston, Lake Charles, Lafayette and New Orleans.

There are other aircraft that could tour with the B-24, such as the T-34 and Stearman. This would create an Air Power History Tour experience for locations within a shorter radius.

In the coming months, we'll continue our planning meetings and solidify the schedule for 2016.

Al Benzing

B-24 Go-Team Leader



Photo by Scott Slocum



Maintenance Update

Since our last report in July, despite the delays with the restoration work that was scheduled to be done on the hanger itself, we have been able to accomplish a few items to further our ongoing efforts on *Diamond Lil*. We have installed large industrial shelving which will be used to hold and store parts and items for Lil's maintenance. We have also acquired a bench vice and bench grinder, which was donated by Brad Pilgrim, our new GM for the B29/B24 Squadron, a few more tool boxes, some work tables and our own maintenance refrigerator! We also have some new ladders on the way. Please see the updated Wish List for items we still need.



Kneeling left to right: Alan Taylor, Chris Williams, Mike Schmidt, Bob Kirby, Marc Conner. Standing left to right: Al Benzing, Steve Hay, Tim Colman, Jacques Robitaille, Curt Lewis, Ed Beck, Steve Rabroker, Brig Conner, Rudy Vander Upwich & Wally Gray.

Avionics First, the shop contracted to install the new radio equipment, has completed their installation which includes a new audio panel, two new transponders, a new Garmin 530W and a new Intercom with ADS-B/GPS. Also the intercom system has been completely rewired.

On Saturday, October 10th, we had a very encouraging turnout with 17 volunteers that came out to work on *Diamond Lil*. After a short meeting, we started opening up engine cowlings and removing the interior flooring to prepare for inspection and thorough cleaning. As the volunteers found out, besides turning wrenches and working on the aircraft, there are a lot more items that could use some help, from cleaning the floor to assembling and laying out work areas. There's a job here for everyone!

Steve Rabroker



Lil's Maintenance Wish List

- Drill Press
- Hand Tools
- Extension Cords & Drop Lights
- Work Tables
- Fans
- Air Hoses
- Bead Blast Machine
- Sheet Metal Shear
- Sheet Metal Brake
- Again – Anything Aircraft Related



“12 Planes of Christmas” brings Holiday cheer to B-24 Diamond Lil restoration efforts

DALLAS, TX (November 30, 2015) – Beginning December 1st, the [Commemorative Air Force’s](#) venerated Consolidated B-24 Liberator *Diamond Lil* will be featured in [“12 Planes of Christmas”](#), a new online giving campaign sponsored by CAF Headquarters that will help support the organization’s mission of restoring and flying World War II aircraft. The aircraft, one of only two Liberators capable of flight today, has been undergoing maintenance and restoration since July 2015. Donations to *Diamond Lil* will provide volunteers with critically needed funds to return the rare four engine bomber to the air next summer.135

“12 Planes of Christmas”, will allow the public to directly participate in our endeavors to preserve and teach American history” said Adam Smith, CAF Executive Vice President of Strategic Development, “We have 12,000 members in every U.S. state and many countries overseas. We also have ,000 followers on Facebook – there is clearly enthusiasm worldwide for the role aviation has played in our shared history.”

The inaugural campaign will highlight twelve diverse restoration projects being undertaken around the nation by CAF volunteers. The featured aircraft include trainers, cargo planes, fighters and bombers flown by the Army Air Forces, Navy, Marines, Tuskegee Airmen and Women Army Service Pilots (WASP). The campaign will also provide donation opportunities for other planes in the extensive CAF fleet.

“World War II history buffs are familiar with the B-24 Liberator” said Allen Benzing, *Diamond Lil* pilot and CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron Assistant Operations Officer, “but what most people don’t know is the Liberator was the most produced American aircraft of the Second World War, flown worldwide by crews from the United States and the British Commonwealth.”

A conservative estimate is over 250,000 men flew Liberators in combat operations during World War II.

Established in 1957 when World War II-era airplanes were nearly extinct, the [Commemorative Air Force](#) is widely recognized as a founder of the Warbird movement, an international effort to find, rebuild and fly vintage military aircraft. The CAF has since assembled the largest World War II flying museum in the world. Nicknamed the “The Ghost Squadron”, the group has entertained and educated millions at airshows for over 50 years. Thousands now follow the organization on social media, connecting enthusiasts around the world.

Returning a 70 year old bomber to the sky requires thousands of volunteer hours. To offset costs, *Diamond Lil* volunteers rely on fundraisers, airshows and aircraft rides, however complicated restorations can require fundraising over several years, effectively grounding an aircraft.

“Last year we raised over \$50,000 through the *Diamond Lil Century Club*.” Benzing added “Thanks to the donations, we have made tremendous progress in *Diamond Lil*’s restoration, including installing new avionics and fuel tanks. We estimate we need another \$60,000 to complete all the work we have planned.”

The *Diamond Lil Century Club* is the B-29/B-24 Squadron’s fundraising program created in 2015 to maintain and operate the aircraft.

[“12 Planes of Christmas”](#) will shift the focus to social media and online fundraising allowing the CAF to reach millions of people interested in World War II aircraft preservation. The campaign will launch on December 1, which is already promoted nationwide as “Giving Tuesday” (a day to support nonprofits following “Black Friday” and Cyber Monday”). [“12 Planes of Christmas”](#), donors can contribute directly to *Diamond Lil* or the CAF Restoration Fund by visiting www.supportcaf.org.



Liberator Legacy: B-24 Veteran's Story

The Major's "Old Sack"

Victor G. Aubry, Jr. was part of "The Greatest Generation." He was also my Dad. His life was a love story for the passion of his life – flying – and the passion for the love of his life, his wife. He nicknamed both of them *Old Sack*.

Part of this love story included here passes through McCook Air Force Base in Lincoln, Nebraska, and lands on the southeastern coast of England at Debach, one of the many U.S. Army Air Corp bases. The tale crosses the English Channel on its way to bomb Nazi-occupied France and into Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany itself.

Most of this chronicle will be in his own words taken from the diary he kept for the twelve months he was overseas. His entries will be in italics exactly as he wrote them even if there are misspellings. The texts in parentheses are my explanations, definitions or names of individuals and will be in regular type. I wish to acknowledge the help of Mr. David J. Schmitt, Historian of the Fighting 493rd BG, and Mr. Darren Jelly in England for their assistance in the identification of individuals and terms.

Briefly, Dad was born on May 6, 1918, in Newark, NJ. He graduated in 1941 from Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, where he played varsity football and baseball. He also completed ROTC training while there. He learned to fly through the Gulf Coast Training Command at Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, and received his pilot's wings in January, 1942, from Barksdale Field, near Shreveport, Louisiana. Prior to going overseas, he served for several months as a flying instructor in the Army

Air Corp Flying Training Command, Parks Air College, in East St. Louis, IL. He decided that if he was ever to get into this "shootin' war", he'd best stop teaching and start flying!

So, on May 6, 1944, his 26th birthday, Captain Victor G. Aubry, Jr. and his crew of the B24J (44-40321), "Old Sack", left McCook Air Force Base in Lincoln, Nebraska, for Debach, England, to join the 493rd Bombardment Group of the "Mighty" 8th Air Force. His May 6th journal addresses his two loves – "..... *God, I love you Hank (his wife). I just hate to say goodbye to her. May never see her again. Got to be strong tho'. I hope I can make her proud of me. The "Old Sack" ran like a top today – hope she keeps it up.*"

Dad arrived at Debach Airfield in England on May 17, 1944, describing the location as "..... *about 8-10 miles from Ipswich and just 4 ½ minutes Fock-Wulf time from Jerry airfields. About 10 miles from English coast.*" He continues to describe the area writing "..... *Base is brand new and facilities are piss-poor. . . Gee, things are inconvenient here. Shaved in ice water. No running hot water. The showers are about a mile down the road. I can see that I'll be dirty while here....*"



Dad is pictured here as a cadet.



L to R: Lt. A.J. Schwartz, Lt. L.J. Bondly, Capt. V.G. Aubry, Jr. and Lt. R. Ennis, at McCook, NB.



Top L-R: Lt. Schwarz, Navigator; Lt. Bondly, Co-Pilot; Capt. Aubry, Pilot; Lt. Ennis, Bombardier; T/Sgt. C. Hunley, Flgt. Engineer.
Bottom L-R: S/Sgt. C. Tucker, Radio Operator; S/Sgt. T. Strader, Tail Gunner; S/Sgt. S. Kans, Waist Gunner; S/Sgt. D. Gibbs, Ball Turret Gunner; Sgt. M. Wunschel, Upper

The 493rd Bombardment Group first entered into combat on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Dad was alerted for the afternoon mission which was eventually scrubbed because of the weather. “..... *Morning bunch got in – lost 3 planes. Russell (Lt. Donald L. Russell) ran into Cooper (Capt. Jack G. W. Cooper) and both seen going down in flames.*”

On June 6, 2015, my husband, Rick, and I prepared for our ride on the B-24A, *Diamond Lil*, from Spaatz Field in Reading, PA. It was a very special ride on a very special day, the 71st anniversary of when the 493rd entered combat and our men into harm's way. It was an emotionally overwhelming experience for me, and one I will cherish and relive many times to come. This flight gave me a unique perspective about these heavy bombers and the roles they played in the air war.

Having stood on the flight deck, I finally began to understand what it took to do what he did. I gained a huge respect and insight into the challenges he and all airmen faced. Above is the official picture of *Old Sack* with Dad and his crew taken at Debach Field.



Moonlight Marge renamed “Moonshine Express” by the 466th Bomb Group after her transfer there.

Dad flew a total of 12 missions in the *Old Sack* and 2 in the B-24J (44-40235), “Moonlight Marge”, before the transition to B-17s occurred. The first of his 14 B-24 missions was on June 7, 1944, and his last on August 15, 1944. At that time the *Old Sack* was transferred to the 489th and in January, 1945, to the MTO (Mediterranean Theater of Operations). After V-E Day, May 8, 1945, she was sent on to Japan. *Moonlight Marge* would be transferred to the 466th and renamed *Moonshine Express*. Crews frequently changed the names of the planes transferred into their group to make them their own. She flew with the 466th until V-E Day. She probably then was sent on to the Pacific Theater. Dad completed his remaining 19 missions in B-17G's ending his combat tour on April 10, 1945.

After completing one of many practice runs in the new B-17s, Dad commented on August 8, 1944, “..... *It seems to be a nice ship and handles a bit better than the 24. I don't like the cockpit arrangement nearly as well either. It seems that we are going to change the group over to B-17s so that the whole division will be 17s instead of mixed. We shall see how it works, but it looks to me like long raids, at higher altitude. Don't know about that. I shall hate to lose the “Old Sack”. She is a wonderful ship.*” He summed it up on August 20, 1944, stating “.....*she flies nicely. I like the B-17 in the air but on the ground it is a lot harder to handle than the 24. All in all tho' I'd say they're about 6 in one, half dozen in another.*”



Official Picture of “Old Sack” B-24J (44-40321)

While at Debach, it took Dad longer to complete his required 30 missions basically because of the responsibilities he picked up along the way. In July, 1944, he became the Squadron Operations Officer for his bomb squad, the 863rd. That same month he and his crew in *Old Sack* were designated as a “Lead Crew”. Lead crews did not fly as frequently as regular crews and the time between his missions got longer and longer. For instance, he flew only 1 mission in September and October, 1944, out of 13; 2 each in November and December out of 12 and 13 respectively and flew only 2 to 3 missions each subsequent month until April, 1945. He was promoted to Major on September 12, 1944, and on February 2, 1945, was appointed Group Training Officer in addition to his other duties. Consequently, the higher the rank, the more responsibilities he had and the fewer missions he flew. On August 16, 1944, Dad noted, “.....*Seems the tour is now definitely 35 missions or 28 with another tour. Major Whit (Maj. George B. Whitlock) says that I won't get home tho. Says the “old man” (Col. Elbert Helton) won't release me.*” He continued to lament on August 20, 1944, “.....*Gosh I wish I could go home. I'm just a bit tired of this business particularly being here and not being able to get my tour over. They've told me that they won't let me finish the required number of missions so that I could get home. Sorta wish I could see my wife. I'm lonesome as hell for her.*”



Air Medal

Dad was awarded the Air Medal initially on July 14, 1944, and then again on 4 separate occasions earning him an oak leaf cluster for each one. His Citation reads, “For meritorious achievement while participating in heavy bombardment missions in the air offensive against the enemy over continental Europe. The courage, coolness, and skill displayed by this officer upon these occasions reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.”

On December 15, 1944, Dad, now a major, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for “extra ordinary achievement while serving as commander in the air of group and squadron formations on heavy bombardment missions against the enemy. Major Aubry demonstrated outstanding airmanship while commanding his formations on successful attacks against Misburg, Germany, 20 June 1944; Russelsheim, Germany, 20 July 1944; and Ludwigshafen, Germany, 5 November 1944, despite the dangers of heavy, accurate anti-aircraft fire on each mission. The brilliant exercise of command displayed by Major Aubry was largely responsible for the success of these missions. His actions reflect the highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States.” These missions are best documented directly from his diary, in his own words.



Distinguished Flying Cross

June 20, 1944

Last nite we left at 2330 for lead crew briefing, with only about 2 hrs. sleep. Well this was a real trip. The “old man” (Col. Helton) flew with us in the “Old Sack”. We went into Hannover, Germany to bomb a synthetic oil plant there. We hit it on the head and leaving the coast up near Denmark could see dense clouds of black smoke up to 20,000'. On our way out saw the B-17's plaster Hamburg. It was also on fire. We had excellent fighter cover all the way in and out. Those little friends are wonderful. Could hug them all. No enemy fighters – but we sure hit a lot of flak. It was very accurate and we had to go thru it to the target. Shook “Old Sack” quite violently. Coming off target caught a burst right above #3 engine, one piece took chunk out of prop blade. Another hit armor plate behind co-pilot's seat. A third came into cockpit and smashed glass behind old man's head. Thought we'd lost him for a minute but no trouble except for flying glass which flak helmets and flak suits took care of. Uneventful trip back home. We really smashed that target.”

July 20, 1944

Got us out early for briefing. We were briefed to hit the Opal (Opel) Motor Works at Russelsheim, Germany. They were making p-planes there. I led the low group in our wing. Had a good trip in and ran into very intense flak at the target. There were about 100-150 heavy guns there throwing large barrages at our altitude coming off the IP (Insertion Point). I could see them getting the range on the lead and high groups. They really threw it at us but we only got one little hole. Wright (Capt. James T. Wright) was leading the low-low element in my group and got two direct bursts.

The first blew the nose-gunners arm (T/Sgt. Joseph Kapsala, Jr.) almost off. Second shook them all over the sky. Good 1st aid by the Bombardier (Second Lt. John H. Shepherd) – saved the kid's life but we're afraid he'll lose his arm. No fighters attacked us altho' they were in the area. Had P47, 51 & 38's for our escort. They were wonderful. Pass for 48 hours starts at 1700. Gonna get drunk."

Thirty-six aircraft from the 493rd plus 2 PFFs (Pathfinders were some of the first planes to receive the new blind bombing aids like the Gee radio navigation system.) from the 34th Bomb Group flew the next mission. Dad writes . . .

November 5, 1944

Up at 330 this AM. Had a good mission planned. A ground support job on the concrete forts in the Metz area. The secondary was Ludwigshafen, P.F.F. in case the primary was overcast. I was command pilot in the hi squadron. Neid (Major George J. Nied) who was to lead had Mickey failure (Radar failure) on assembly and I led the group. Primary was covered so we went to Lud. They really had us bracketed in. Shot out our elevators & rudders out also my oxygen and radio. Got Johnson (Second Lt. Bruce P. Johnson) our deputy – he blew up. Also Kolberg (Lt. John H. Kolberg) spun all the way in. We had our Radio Operator (T/Sgt. John A. Langenberg) hit in hip plus a burst under Lloyd's (Capt. Marion G. Lloyd) seat that numbed his legs. I took over and flew back on A.F.C.E. (Automatic Flight Control System) Led the boys home and then landed at Mendlesham on auto-pilot. Worst flak I've ever seen. Saw & heard it all. Gusick (Capt. John Guzik) rode with Johnson and went down."

The following quoted paragraphs were submitted to Dad's home-town New Jersey newspapers in Summit, NJ (The Herald), New Brunswick, NJ (The Rutgers University Target), and in Lansdowne, PA (The Delaware County Times), and New York (The Herald Tribune) by the 8th Air Force Bomber Station from Lt. Col. Henry A. Orban, 24, of Hillside, NJ, his squadron commander. It is thought that the article was actually written by Capt. Clifford Love, Jr. a Staff Intelligence Officer, and appeared in The Herald on February 22, 1945. On December 2, 1944, Dad wrote in his diary, "..... "Cliff Love (Capt. Clifford Love, Jr.) wrote a story about this mission over Ludwigshafen and is sending it home, along with a picture. I'd like to see whether it comes thru or not."

Excerpts from that article appear below.

"Major Aubry encountered flak bursts, which caused his Flying Fortress, the Green Hornet, to be pitched around like a Motel T. Ford on a rough corduroy road, while on the deadly dangerous bomb run. Several fragments of the exploding shells tore through the bomber, shattering Maj. Aubry's windshield, ripping his jacket, stunning his pilot, Captain Marion G. Lloyd, 24, of Kennett, Mo., and tearing the oxygen mask from a gunner's face.

Soon after "bombs away" a flak burst made a direct hit on the horizontal stabilizer, severing the manual control cables to the rudder and elevators. Major Aubry, through the use of the auxiliary set of controls provided by the 'automatic pilot,' brought the heavy bomber back to level flight just in time to receive yet another hit which injured the radio operator. By this time, most of the navigation equipment had been destroyed, the radio was dead, and gasoline was being lost due to holes in the wing tanks.

Major Aubry said that he would have left the formation then but for the fact that his deputy lead Fortress had been shot down.

Major Aubry led his formation back to its home base and proceeded to make a landing by using the 'automatic pilot' to control the rudder and elevators while Capt. Lloyd operated the aileron controls manually. On the approach and while about fifty feet from the ground, the *Green Hornet* crash lands. Propeller wash from another bomber turned the Fortress half turtle, the tip of the right wing nearly scraping the ground, and the Fortress came near to crashing into the ground. The two pilots righted the Fortress in the nick of time for a safe landing."



After the mission, Dad with Capt. Love on left.

Then, on November 6, 1944, Dad continues in this diary entry. *"Talked to Lloyd about the mission – the airplane is salvage – needs all new gas tanks, 2 new wings, a new vertical fin plus all the oxygen system, etc. I think they are putting Lloyd's crew in for the D.F.C. I'd like to get one but I don't think anybody will put me in for it. Oh well -"* It turns out they did just that.

Throughout all of his journal entries he repeatedly talks about the passion for the love of his life, his wife, and how much he misses her. On August 14, 1944, he wrote *".....Am feeling fine but sure miss my Old Sack – I mean my real old sack. Golly – she's one in a million & I love her so goddamn much. Do wish I could go home. I'm sick of this combat business....."* Continuing on September 1, 1944, *"..... Sure miss my wife, baby (my older sister, Alice) and home. When I get time to think I just think about home and get blue as hell. Sure wish this was over."* And then again on November 20, 1944, *".....I'm really envious of these kids that are finishing their tours. God! Would I like to go home ----."*

"..... It looks now as tho' I'll be quite some time getting the 30 missions in. I'm really sort of mad since I'm so lonesome it hurts. I want to go home more than anything I know" he wrote on December 2, 1944, and continued on December 8 with *"..... Miss Hank something fierce. Gee. I do love her so terribly much."*

On New Year's Eve, December 31, 1944, Dad wrote, *".....Surely missed Hank and the baby over these holidays. It's been just hell without them. The rest is awfully good for me but it gives me too much time to think. Whenever I think, I think of Hank incessantly. Am really in love with her. I sometimes wonder if this separation will ever stop. I sure want to go home."*

On April 10, 1945, after eleven months of combat flying, Dad finally was scheduled for his 30th and last mission. It was an airfield in Neuruppin, Germany, outside of Berlin. According to the mission report by 1st Lt. A.R. Curran, Asst. P.I. Officer, of the 30 aircraft leaving Debach, 29 reached and bombed the target by visual technique in squadron formation. One aircraft returned early. He further wrote, *"This target presented special difficulties as the MPIs had no prominent features, but were simply points on the landing ground. (The MPI is the Mean Point of Impact which is the actual target point the bombardier is aiming at in order for all bombs to fall sequentially rather than in one place.)* There were no runways on the field to aid the bombardier in orienting himself. The bombardiers are to be congratulated for their work on this mission. It is apparent by the patterns that all the formations were good, indicative of good flying by the wing ships. There were at least 16 single and twin aircraft ships on the field at the time of the bombing. The bomb craters will keep them on the ground for a few days."

Dad writes, *"....Late briefing this morning. This time an airdrome on the north side of Berlin called Neurippen. Trip in good with plenty of fighters thank God. Jets hit the group in front of us but we got away without any hits. Some flak on way in. None at target to speak of. Hit the airfield right on the nose – lots of Jerry fighters on it too. After target lots of accurate flak but we took some evasive action and only got a few holes. Back to base and buzzed the field at about 5 feet. Landed and Frazer (Maj. John W. Frazer) brought a bottle out to Kelly (Lt. Kenneth Kelly) while Cook (Capt. Norman R. Cook) brought one out to me. Got 'em down in about 30 minutes and was on my ear. Dinner after critique and to bar again - #30 and tour completed – brother I'm glad that's over."*

Major Victor G. Aubry, Jr. entered the Army Air Corp on December 21, 1941. According to his official Certificate of Service, Dad's military record states that he served a total of 2 years, 9 months and 22 days in the United States and 1 year and 10 days overseas. He left for England on May 12, 1944, and arrived on May 15, 1944. With his tour completed, he departed England on May 11, 1945, arriving in the United States on May 23, 1945.

His final journal entries follow: on May 8, 1945, he wrote, *"Same old story today. Heard Churchill proclaim V-E Day. Got awful drunk on post – lots of booze."* and then on May 9, 1945, *"Was pretty hungover this morning. Ate breakfast then back to the sack and slept till lunch. Am awfully lonesome for home and sure wish that I'd be sent out. Walked to pub (The Dog in Grundisburgh) and had a couple of ales – then back to sack."*

After serving for a short period of time at the Pentagon, he was discharged through Andrews Field, Washington, D.C., on February 8, 1946, to finally go home to live the American Dream with the love of his life, his *Old Sack*.





B-24 Liberator Unit Profile

Editor's note: The United States Army Air Forces, Navy and Marines as well as the air and naval forces of the British Commonwealth, flew the B-24 during World War II. Each issue of the Diamond Lil Century Club Newsletter will highlight a particular unit that flew the mighty Liberator.

On October 16, 2015, five veterans of the 380th Bombardment Group (H) were reunited with a Liberator when they and their families visited Diamond Lil at the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) National Airbase at Dallas Executive Airport. Not coincidentally, this issue's selected B-24 unit is the 380th Bombardment Group (H), with information provided from the association's website. For more about the visit, download the press release from the [Commemorative Air Force website](#). Photos from the visit can be found on page 13.

The 380th Bombardment Group (H) flew B-24 Liberator bombers in the Southwest and Western Pacific areas in World War II as part of the 5th Air Force. They were known as the FLYING CIRCUS and as the KING OF THE HEAVIES (note the lion in the insignia, pg. 12).



The 380th went overseas in April 1943 to become the second B-24 unit in the Fifth Air Force at that time after the 90th Bomb Group. The other Heavy Bomber unit (the 43rd) flew B-17s.

The 380th was placed under the control of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and assigned to the Australian Northwest Area Command operating out of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. They were thus the only heavy bomber unit available to cover the whole of the Dutch East Indies (1,000,000 square miles) from July 1943 until late in 1944. At that time the successes in the New Guinea campaign had brought the other Fifth Air Force units close enough to the East Indies to join in that task.

The 380th conducted the longest bombing missions of WWII, to the oil refineries at Balikpapan, Borneo (200 miles further than the Ploesti mission in Europe) and to those at Surabaya, Java (as long as Ploesti). They did both of these missions several times during our stay in Australia.

In addition to attacks on the Japanese oil supply, they were heavily engaged in crippling their shipping fleet to reduce the Japanese capability of supplying their far-flung forces. They also heavily bombed the numerous Japanese airfields in the East Indies to reduce the Japanese threat to Australia and our New Guinea forces.

In its service with the Australians, the 380th served longer under the operational control of an Allied country than any other Air Force unit (from June 1943 until February 1945).

As part of its duties in Australia, the 380th carried out the operational training of 52 Australian crews and their associated ground staffs so that the Australians could take over the East Indian campaign activities of the 380th when they were assigned to The Philippines in February 1945. Many of the Australians so trained have become part of the 380th Bomb Group Association, strong evidence of the strong ties of friendship, which developed between these airmen in their long service together.

Source: 380th Bomb Group Association website: : <http://380th.org/>

Also recommended, a 2012 documentary about a B-24 in the 380th *Shady Lady*. See <http://www.factnotfictionfilms.com/documentary-films/shady-lady/>



B-24 Liberator Unit Profile

380th Bomb Group Patch



380th Bomb Group Squadron Patches



529th



530th



528th



531st



CAF crew and 380th veterans: Russell O'Day, Co-Pilot and Pilot, *Lady Luck*, 528th; Jim Meredith, Squadron Executive Officer, 528th; Edward Walford, Navigator, *Slightly Dangerous*, 531st; Dexter Baker, Sr.,



Suggested Reading

B-24 Combat Missions: First-hand accounts of Liberator operations over Nazi Europe

Martin Bowman, Author

Review: *Elephant Book Company*

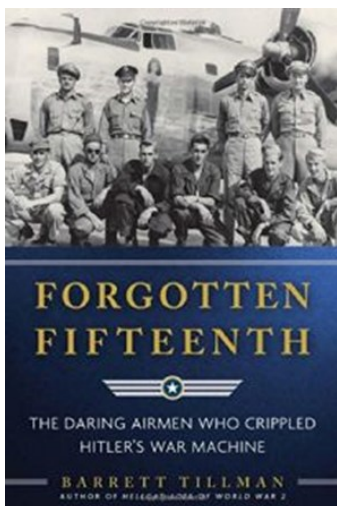
As with its bestselling companion volume dedicated to the B-17 bomber, B-24: Combat Missions takes the reader through every crew position of the Liberator to show the reader what it was like to fly, and fight, in what was one of the most famous bombers of World War II. With the B-17 flying fortress, the 'Lib' formed the backbone of the USAAF's bombing offensive against Germany, but it was produced in far greater numbers than any other US aircraft. Uniquely, the book features over one hundred first-hand accounts from Liberator crewmembers. Their fascinating recollections are brought vividly to life through a remarkable selection of photos, both archive and commissioned, of the interior and exterior of the plane, and of items of memorabilia.



Forgotten Fifteenth: The Daring Airmen Who Crippled Hitler's War Machine

Barrett Tillman, Author

Review: *Publishers Weekly*



Noted aviation historian Tillman (Whirlwind) has written the long-overdue first history of the little-known U.S. Fifteenth Air Force, whose mission focus during WWII was southern and eastern Europe. It is a solid chronological history of the unit, from its formation through war's end, as it flew strategic bombing missions from bases in Italy. Tillman covers all of the major events in the unit's history, including the famous raids on Ploesti, Romania—the heart of Axis petroleum refining—as well as the first bombing of Germany from the south. He also addresses many lesser known aspects of these operations such as the prisoner rescue of 1944, aerial reconnaissance actions, and the work done in cooperation with Yugoslavian partisans. The sections of the book dedicated to personal experiences in aerial combat bring the challenges and bravery of the aircrews to life. Tillman's style is engaging and his history is an enjoyable and informative read for serious historians as well as for more general readers with an interest in aviation and military history. (June)



Diamond Lil Photo Gallery

Featured Photographer, Scott Slocum





Diamond Lil Trivia

QUESTION:

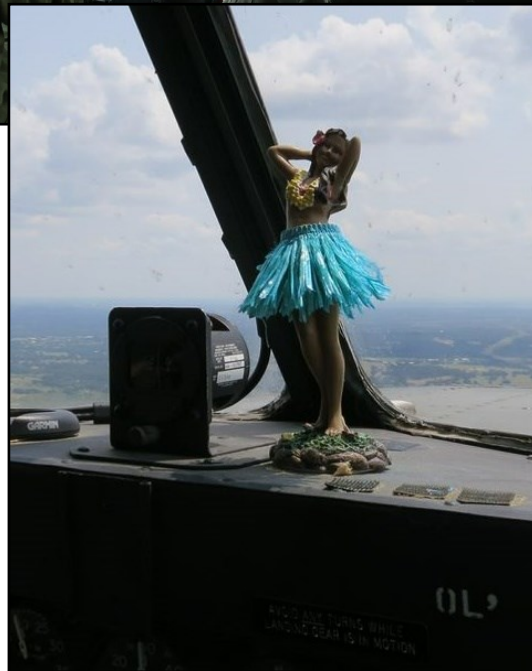
What is the name of *Diamond Lil's* hula dancer and what is her function on the plane?

Please reply with your answer to b24diamondlil@hotmail.com. The first five people to answer correctly will be recognized in our next quarterly email!



LAST ISSUE'S TRIVIA QUESTION: *Diamond Lil* has been known by a couple of different names during the time the CAF has owned her. What year was the name *Diamond Lil* first put on the airplane?

ANSWER: *Diamond Lil* was first put on the airplane in 1971. Prior to that, she was operated in the Red, White and Blue colors of the CAF and had no name.



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.

b24diamondlil@hotmail.com.



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?

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.

In the future, we will publish member stories, e-mails and photographs. Also watch for e-mails between newsletter publication dates with news about *Diamond Lil*, special events, tour schedules or stories of interest.



Photo by Rod Reilly

***Diamond Lil* Century Club**

Dallas Executive Airport

5661 Mariner Drive

Dallas, Texas 75237

b24diamondlil@hotmail.com

www.diamondlil.org



COMMEMORATIVE
AIR FORCE