

was the crew chief and flight engineer on the XB-38 during its construction and testing from July 10, 1942 to June 16, 1943.

Bill tells me that the Lockheed Corporation felt that the performance of the B-17 could be improved by installing the Allison V-1710-89 liquid cooled engines instead of the conventional Wright R-1820s. They also wanted to check out a possible alternative power source if the shortages of the widely used R-1820 should develop. The Army Air Force at Wright Field, Ohio was looking for a place to use all of those Allison's coming off the assembly line so they gave Lockheed a contract for one aircraft with the proposed configuration and, according to Bill, pressured Lockheed to hustle the project along.

They started with the airframe of an existing B-17E which had been assigned to Lockheed-Vega as the "pattern aircraft." This was the plane that had been used in the manufacturing start up phase to check the parts manufactured at the plant to be sure that they would fit.

They hung the new engines on the Wright engine mounts, but it is obvious that the nacelles resemble those of the Lockheed P-38. They also installed fuel cells in the wing tips. The B-38 first flew on May 19, 1943 and made nine flights altogether. The pressure was on to complete the tests quickly. The last flight was made on June 16, 1943, they were to climb to full power to 37,000 feet as they flew up the San Joaquin Valley. The pilot was Bud Martin, the co/pilot was George P MacDonald. Frank Osberg was the engineer up front and two more crewmen Shannon and Byrnes were in the radio compartment. As they climbed out at 25,000 feet the number three engine ran out of oil and seized, pulling a fuel line loose in the process. A fire started which spread to the fuel tanks so the crew bailed out.

Cruising speed of the B-38 was 226 MPH, about 25 MPH faster than a standard B-17E. When Martin and MacDonald hit the silk they neglected to wait for the count of 10 so that air resistance would slow them down. Instead, they immediately pulled the rip cords. They were wearing parachutes with cotton shrouds and risers which couldn't take that kind of stress. Both chutes failed. Mac Donald was killed and Martin seriously injured. The others got down in good shape although Shannon and Byrnes couldn't get the rear door open until they were pretty close to the ground.

Bill Harshbarger didn't make the flight that day. He was busy becoming a father. I think he named his new son "Lucky"

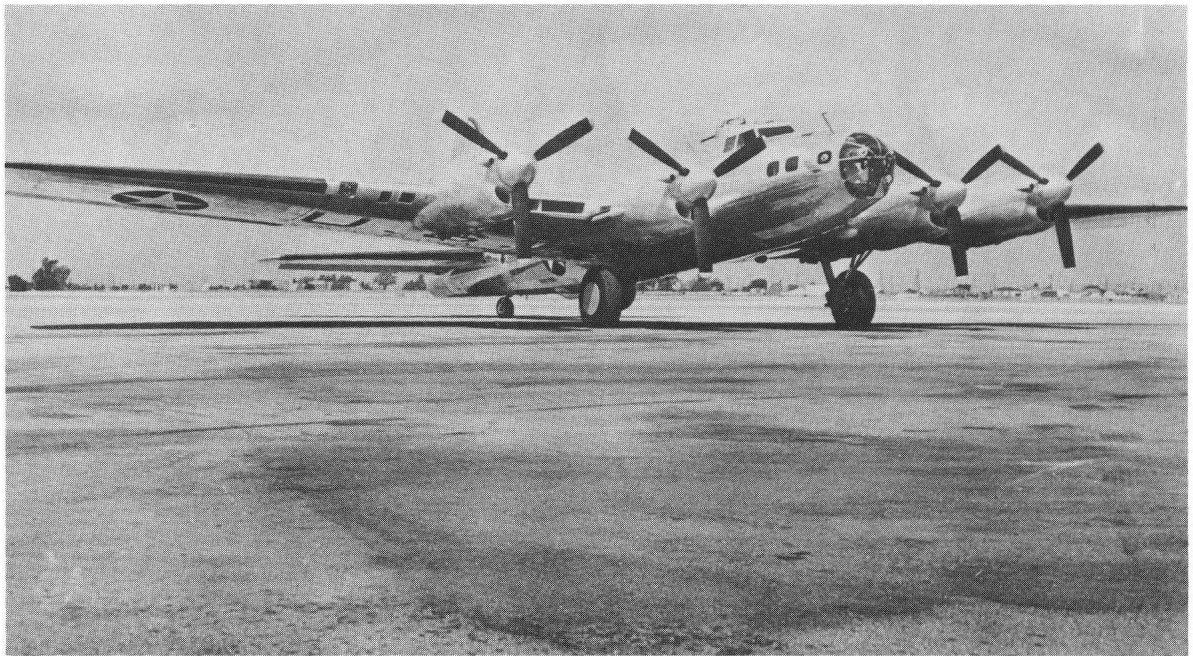


Photo (above) Lockheed B-38 (USAF photo via Bob Waag)

Woodbridge, NJ  
Dear Bud

I am including several photographs with my membership application.

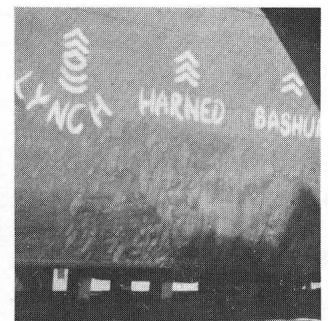
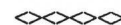


Photo 1 (above left) Wilson B Wilkes center, congratulates one of the ground crew of ship #25 "The Century Limited" Photo 2 (above right) Names of the ground crew of ship #25 painted on the bomb bay door. They are from left: M/Sgt Harold Lynch-Crew Chief, William L Harned-Assistant Crew Chief, Corporal George Bashara.

William L Harned 824 Squadron



Shreveport, Louisiana  
Dear Bud.

In reference to the picture of ship #35 on the back cover of Torretta Flyer No 17, it was indeed flown by Lt Bob Wester, Co/Pilot. This plane was our original for crew #35. To the best of my knowledge the gremlin was painted on it back in Fresno, California before we headed overseas. I am enclosing