

Cpl	Harold C	Vincenz		825
	Richard E	Vobradz	E	824
	Albert C	Vroome	B	824
2/Lt	Frank M	Vrtacnik	C/P	824
Cpl	Peter A	Watters		825
Cpl	Millard G	Weaver	E	826
Sgt	Minton P	Weaver		827
1/Lt	William S	Weaver	P	824
Pvt	John A	Weaver, Jr.		826
Sgt	Chester O	Webb		824
Cpl	Carl W	Webber	G	826
1/Lt	George W	Wehrle	N	826
S/Sg	Stanley L	Wells	G	827
Sgt	Leonard J	Whetstone	UG	825
Sgt	Herbert F	Whitworth	R/O	825
	James A	Williams	E	825
2/Lt	Bernard	Young	C/P	827

List compiled since Torretta Flyer 32, and the 1997 Memorial Booklet

## Guest Editorial

### ***The B-24 deserves respect!***

***By Robert F. Dorr***

*Robert F. Dorr, an Air Force veteran, lives with his family in Oakton, Va. His e-mail address is RobertDorr@aol.com. The story was taken from a news clipping.*

A couple of years ago, former Air Force Capt. Dolphin Overton told me his family was marketing a new food product called B-17 Steak Sauce. Overton of Smithfield, NC., is one of our nation's heroes. A 1949 West Point graduate, he endured 100 combat missions in the Korean War and became an air ace, shooting down five enemy Mig-15 jets. He left the Air Force in 1953.

Because Overton had flown the North American F-86 Sabre, I asked him why he had not named his product F-86 Steak Sauce.

"That's easy," he said with a grin. "The B-17 is the 'most recognized' airplane in the history of aviation." He is right. I was thinking about this simple truth, and about the B-17 Flying Fortress, when I mourned the loss of actor James Stewart last year. After his death, the media reminded us that Stewart, too, was an American hero. Apart from his film achievements, Stewart flew 20 combat missions in Europe from 1944 to 1945 as a squadron commander and B-17 pilot.

Stewart's service to our nation was considerable—he eventually became a brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve and boosted the service's image with movies like "Strategic Air Command." Stewart is one of my idols, both for his contributions to the Air Force and for his amiable, guy-next-door performances in movies. With regard to his B-17 combat missions, I read about them in three national magazines and heard about them on radio and television.

The media unanimously put Stewart in the cockpit of the "most recognized" plane in history—the B-17. I called the author of one of those news reports, who also happened to be an Air Force member.

"Stewart flew B-24s," I told him. The news writer's reply: "That's a matter of opinion. "But it isn't. He was wrong. The media were wrong. Also wronged were 30,000 living World War II veterans who repaired, maintained, worked on, supported and flew the other bomber, the one that is not "most recognized:" the B-24 Liberator. I know a little about aviation and can assure readers that the B-24 was a real plane flown by real people. Stewart's 445th Bomb Group at Tibenham, England, was equipped only with B-24s. As a lieutenant colonel, Stewart commanded the 700th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), also at Tibenham, which flew only B-24s. Stewart also served in other slots at locations where only B-24s were in service.

Like the famous B-17, the B-24 was a four-engined heavy bomber developed by American industry before the United States entered World War II. The B-24 was developed by Rueben Fleet's Consolidated Aircraft Co. in San Diego. The first B-24 completed its maiden flight on Jan. 29, 1940, almost five years after the prototype B-17.

### ***A Long history***

To the ordinary citizen or Air Force member, maybe it is no big deal when news stories put a pilot in the wrong plane. But it matters when the plane is the B-24. Consider this: More B-24s were built than any other military plane in US. History — 19,256, compared with 12,731 B-17s. No fighter, transport or trainer aircraft was manufactured in such numbers. A B-24 caught on the ground at Hickam Field, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941, produced the first American casualties of World War II. Liberators were manufactured by four companies — Consolidated, Douglas, Ford and North American—and at one time the Ford plant in Willow Run, Mich., was assembling a new B-24 every 53 minutes. It turned out more bombers in one day than US. industry has ever produced in the 1990s. Liberators fought in the European, Mediterranean, Pacific and China-Burma-India Theaters. From North Africa they mounted the Aug. 1, 1943, air assault on German-occupied oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania—one of the most daring raids in history. In 1957, a retired B-24 gave me occasional respite from the rigors of basic training as an enlisted airman at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. I found solitude relaxing beneath the wing of a Ford-built B-24 on Lackland's parade ground. It was the last B-24 in service before being put to rest. This same Liberator can be seen at Lackland today, after 40 more years in the elements but perhaps not much longer.

The magazine, Air Classics, tells us that this aircraft will soon be sold to a museum overseas. A spokesman at Lackland said he could not confirm the report. The Air Force's last B-24, an American treasure worthy of preservation, should be kept in this country and moved indoors.

John Strauss, Stewart's publicist in Beverly Hills, Calif.; Dr. Jacob Neuleld of the Air Force History Office in Washington, DC.; and David Menard, an expert at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, all assure me that I have placed Stewart in the right airplane.

I should add that Stewart did fly B-17s in the United States before going to England.