



SANTA MARIA DIARY

By JIM FARMER

Four of us were watching intently through the windows of our Cessna as N3713G pulled up off our starboard wing, a truly beautiful sight. It was the first time we had ever shared the air with one of the famed Flying Fortresses, this one a veteran of many hours before the TV and movie screens. Cameras were ready and already clicking exposures of this all too rare occasion.

This ex-Air Force Fortress bore the markings she had be-

come known by, as THE LILLY, during the three-year tenure of the TV series, *12 O'Clock High*. And Saturday, the 13th of January 1968 was the first time she had taken to the air since the completion of that series months earlier. The occasion was a check flight prior to release of the airplane for a flight to Santa Maria, California, where filming of the motion picture *Thousand Plane Raid* was to begin on Monday, 15 January.





PHOTO CREDITS:
 Page 178- Upper
Santa Maria Times
 - Lower
 Jim Farmer
 Page 179- Upper
Santa Maria Times
 - Lower
 John Davis
 Page 180- Upper
 Jim Farmer (both)
 - Lower
Santa Maria Times
 Page 181- Upper left
 Ed Maloney
 - Right
 Mirisch Films

Personnel of The Air Museum, Ontario, California had been working toward this day since early December. The four of us that were now intent on N3713G each felt that the days, nights, and long weekends of hard work were all made worthwhile in this one moment. But as Tom Piedmonte, the Air Museum's photographer prepared to take a series of pictures, the Fortress pilot, Don Lykins, a veteran Western Air Lines instructor, broke in over the Cessna's speaker to announce he had a serious drop in oil pressure, was feathering No. 3 engine and heading back to Ontario.

Disappointed, yet totally engrossed in the scene, we watched as Lykins gracefully slipped the Fortress off on its right wing toward the field some ten miles distant. As the pilot set up his long approach to Ontario's main Runway Two Five, we could see the large quantities of black oil covering the engine and wing behind the now still No. 3 propeller. Despite her affliction, or possibly because of it, the Fortress looked as though it were meant for this environment, to struggle and perhaps one day die, here. Her proud grace was enhanced in our minds as we watched her sink through the haze toward the Ontario Airport.

The airplane caused quite a stir as it moved into the terminal area and jockeyed for parking position with an incoming Western Air Lines Electra. It evoked the curiosity of many of these on hand to see a famous Flying Fortress

By the time our small group of frustrated photographers had taxied in LILLY was engulfed in an unofficial crowd of welcomers. And the pilots of the now silent Electra? Well, they had somehow managed to find their way to the cockpit where they got a quick runthrough of flight procedures from fellow employee Don Lykins.

LILLY was later taxied back to The Air Museum where it was determined that a bad valve guide atop one of No. 3 engine's cylinders was to blame. The "jug" would have to be pulled. After lunch and a session with the pilot and mechanics, and a phone call, Ed Maloney, The Air Museum's director had volunteer Bob Fish fly over to Orange County Airport. There, amidst last minute efforts by the Tallmantz crew to get their B-17G ready for the same film, Fish bought two spare cylinders. Meanwhile, mechanics Bob Nightengale and Jerry Lentz began the tedious job of disassembly.

Time was now a factor. It had been hoped that the Fortress could be flown to Santa Maria that Saturday afternoon, but this was out of the question. The contract required the Fortress to be at Santa Maria, "ready to go," Monday morning. The job that was estimated to take an afternoon moved on into the night. Floodlights were rigged to the maintenance stands. The cylinder was removed by 9:00 P.M. The crew called it a morning sometime after



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jim Farmer graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1966 with a B.A. degree in Art and a minor in Asian history. While there he worked as part-time illustrator in the School of Public Health. He has had a lifelong interest in aviation. In the past three years Jim Farmer has been head of the art department at Banning High School, Banning, California. He is presently an artist on the staff of The Air Museum and pursuing his Research Project 6803 concerning the civil B-17 airplanes. He has determined that 55 were licensed in the U. S. since 1945, with 32 still listed on the F.A.A. registry, and he wants to complete the history of the role these airplanes have had in civil aviation. As usual, aid from other A.A.H.S. Members is solicited in finding further data on these and the similar PB-1. He is pictured here by a wrecked B-25 movie "prop" for a TV film, *Sole Survivor*, on the Mojave Desert.



The Air Museum's B-17G in "movie" markings DF-A and 124485 poses for closeups at left during filming of *1,000 Plane Raid*, and with actor



Chris George and Museum Director Ed Maloney, right. **BUCKING BRONCO** was "movie" name assigned to the B-17G-90DL, s/n 44-83684.

midnight.

The new cylinder was secured in place and checked out by 4:00 P.M. Sunday. The spare cylinder, tools, two 50 caliber machines guns and ammunition belts were carried up through the bomb bay. With Lykins, Bob Grider (second pilot), Nightengale, Lentz and Maloney on board, N3713G lifted into the air for the last time as **THE LILLY** late Sunday afternoon and landed at Santa Maria about 7:00 that night.

Monday, 15 January 1968. The morning of the 15th broke over an English aerodrome in the middle of California. The field was complete, with olive drab maintenance shops, barracks, an operations complex, and an English-type control tower, and the usual complement of support vehicles. All was ready for air operations, yet one of the three contracted Fortresses was still missing; Frank Tallman's gray and green B-17G was not there. The Air Museum's **LILLY** was now sharing the field with N17W, an honest to goodness B-17F. She had arrived the previous day.

The two airplanes were quickly taken in charge by the motion picture company crews. The orange and black N17W received a fresh coat of O.D. and gray, and soon became GK-R, with **CAN DO** on the nose. After some high speed taxiing by **LILLY**, the old *12 O'Clock High* markings were covered with a coat of O.D. and replaced with call letters AD-F and the name **BUCKING BRONCO** adorned the nose.

B-17G (44-43525) of Tallmantz Aviation, Inc. arrived that afternoon, and soon took to the air again with the B-25 camera plane to begin filming. It previously had had the call letters KY-L and **BALLS OF FIRE** painted on at Orange County Airport. As Santa Maria became fogged in at day's end the two spent the night at Paso Robles.

Tuesday, 16 January. KY-L and the B-25 returned to Santa Maria. Repainting of DF-A was completed. Repainting and fitting of false turrets on GK-R were finished. The combat art and mission scores for both DF-A and GK-R had been prepared beforehand on adhesive paper that could be quickly attached to any clean metal surface.

Wednesday, 17 January. DF-A took to the air with Lykins, Grider and Maloney. They were to make a series of low passes between the runway and the movie control tower, flying from north to south across the field. There were four cameras rolling as Lykins came on over the trees at the north end of the field to begin the first pass. Once past the trees he retarded the throttles, letting the Fortress sink to within a few feet of the ground. Some of the film company reportedly dove for cover as it looked as though DF-A

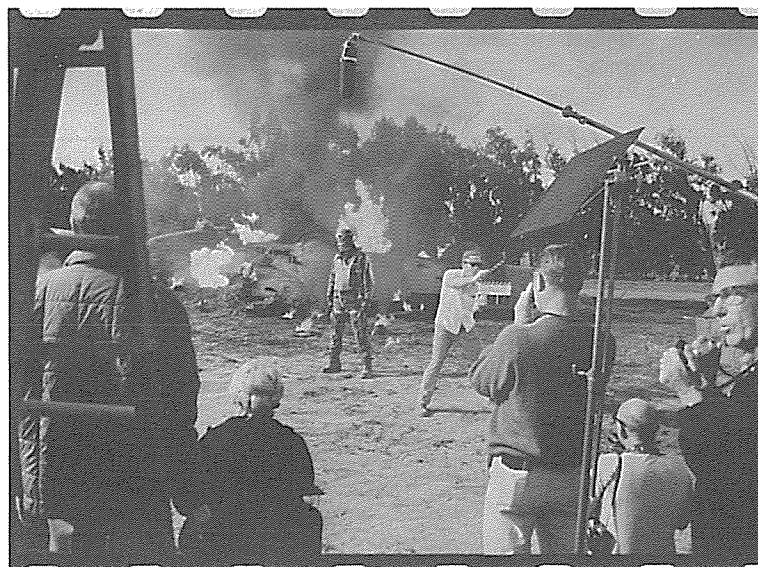
were going to crash. Though the director, Boris Sagal, was quite satisfied with this first pass, Lykins and Grider insisted on trying it again and again; finally they made six such passes before they, the pilots, were satisfied. Then came a series of intentionally bad touch-and-go landings before the cameras on Santa Maria's main runway.

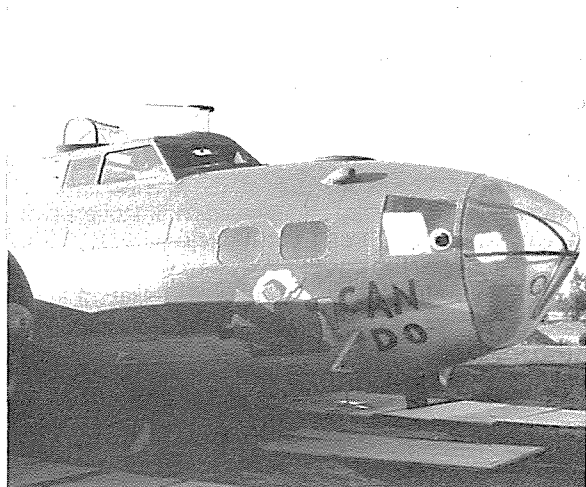
Meanwhile, on the ground, KY-L had a shattered A-26 plexiglas nose installed. The whole nose section appeared to have been ventilated with bullet holes. The camera scene involved the removing of two rather grotesque "dead" airmen, the bombardier and navigator, after the airplane's return from a raid. It was indeed a challenge to reason to watch the mortal remains of one of these two men, horribly cut and bloody about the face, walk around between takes and casually smoke a cigarette before being called back to death by the director.

Thursday, 18 January. Filming of actors around aircraft and buildings. KY-L took to the air and was filmed crossing the north end of the field, firing two red flares to indicate wounded aboard.

Friday, 19 January. Close-up scenes around parked aircraft.

Saturday, 20 January. Began setting up burning scene to be filmed on Monday. DF-A is taxied to ramp area for a ground scene between principal actors. Chris George, the





CAN DO was assigned to Aviation Specialties' B-17F. At right, the "dying" airman is removed from **BALLS OF FIRE**, of Tallmantz Aviation.

base commander in the film, "chews out" Gary Marshall, the rowdy RAF officer, for buzzing the field. Since this was Saturday Santa Maria's local population was on hand for the filming, often presenting many headaches for the assistant director as one of the younger set would usually choose a key line as the time to cry out. At this point the assistant director would also cry out — but usually not so innocently.

Afterward, a 50 caliber machine gun was set in the starboard waist window of DF-A. The gun was charged, the camera rolled, and the gunner fired his blank rounds into the empty sky above. So ended the first week at Santa Maria.

Sunday, 21 January. Filming operations were shut down. Cast and crew took a tour of Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Monday, 22 January. The "crash" scene of DF-A was filmed this day. Its left main landing gear was rolled onto a mound of earth so that the right wing nearly touched the ground. A repainted DC-7 wing was moved in behind and to the right. The cameras were aft, and it appeared that one of DF-A's wings had been torn off in the crash. Once the motion picture crew had finished setting out their isolated oil fires, it truly looked like BUCKING BRONCO had been written off.

Tuesday, 23 January. KY-L crash scene setup was begun.

Wednesday, 24 January. KY-L crash scene was filmed. A graduated trench to a depth equal to the landing gear's length had been dug. Once rolled into the trench, which was then concealed with planking and artificial grass, it appeared as though KY-L had bellied in. However, the propellers were neither feathered nor bent. And don't be surprised if you think you see segments of the original Paul Mantz belly landing for the 1949 motion picture *12 O'Clock High* — you will. Copy negatives from that original black and white film were carefully tinted to match the color balance of this drama.

Thursday, 25 January. Last flight scenes were filmed this day. On the ground the crew began packing. In the early afternoon three airplanes moved to the end of the main runway. First in line was DF-A with Lykins and Grider at the controls, Maloney, and "stowaway" Bob Fish. Next came KY-L, piloted by Jim Appleby, and lastly, Frank Pine in the red and white B-25 camera plane, N1042B.

Once airborne the trio headed west towards the Pacific Ocean. Appleby formed on Lykins' wing. As they arrived over the sea Pine turned his airplane into a part-time fighter, making gunnery/camera passes at the small formation for

the better part of three hours. Maloney was photographed sending off a "coded message" with a blinker light from the radio compartment hatch. Late in the afternoon they headed back toward the coast and to Santa Maria.

Late that afternoon GK-R was also busy before the cameras to film a takeoff sequence. The director wanted a long run — typical of a war laden Fortress — and the pilots had their hands full. This Fortress, now stripped of even its recent borate tanks, continually wanted to lift its tail off the ground and get into the air before they were ready. They finally had to fly the second half of the long takeoff with their wheels no more than touching the ground to properly effect the scene.

Friday, 26 January. The last day at Santa Maria. Much packing left to do. The director, satisfied with what he had in the can, released the Fortresses. He would now go back to the Hollywood studio to finish the sound stage scenes. DF-A and KY-L left for their Southern California homes. Arizona-bound GK-R did not leave until Saturday, and would be back in war paint exactly a year later, in Hawaii for the filming of "Tora Tora Tora."

Looking back over this two-week period, with some of the future, financially more ambitious, aviation films in the back of one's mind, it seemed a shame that someone does not assemble a fleet of at least ten or twelve of the Fortresses, while they are still around, to do a truly representative motion picture of this most important period in the evolution of U. S. strategic air power. To recapture for generations yet unborn the spirit of union and resolve so eloquently told by the true stories of the men and the planes that were the Army Air Forces over "Festung Europa."

One gets very tired of seeing the same war footage used over and over again as during the past twenty-year period. It is in part because of this dependence on vintage combat film that the markings of the three airplanes used in this production do not coincide with the period of the first U.S. 'thousand plane raid,' which occurred during the "Big Week" in February 1944. The colors and insignia of the three Fortresses put the time of the story not later than early July 1943.

Despite the lack of historical accuracy the motion picture retains two virtues; it is entertaining, and devotes a large amount of time to flying sequences.

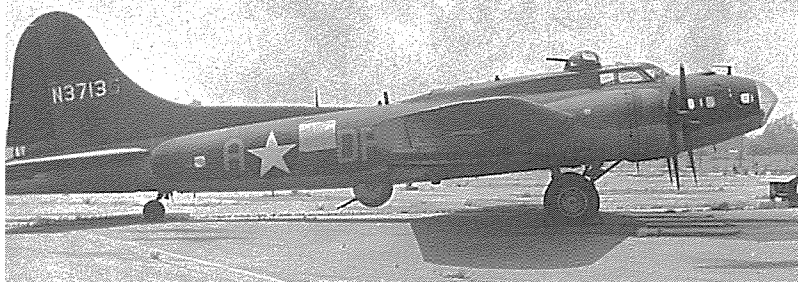
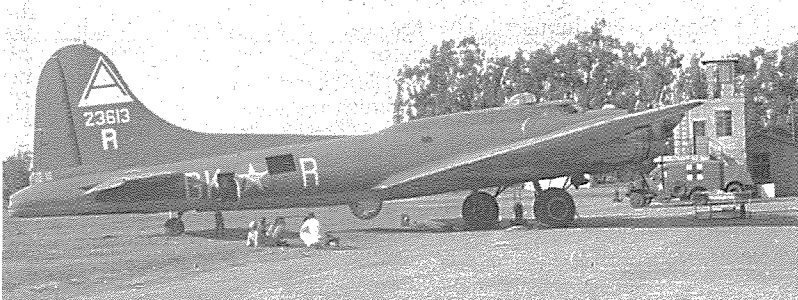
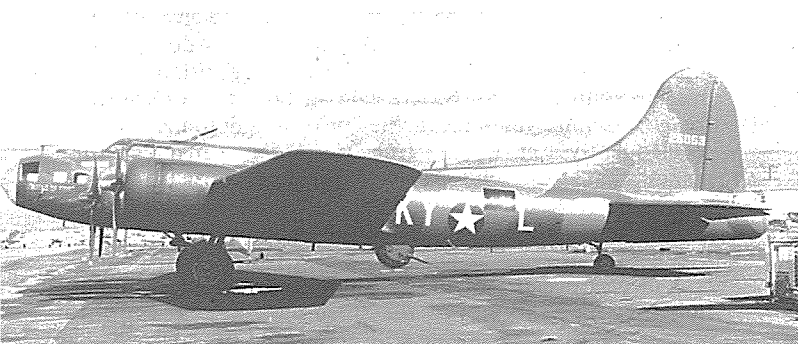


PHOTO CREDITS: Above—B-17G-90-DL/DB-17P (Bill Balogh); Air Museum's N3713 (Bruce Oriss). Center—B-17F-70-BO/TB-17F (Oriss);



Aviation Specialties' GK-R (Jim Farmer). Below—B-17G-85-DL/DB-17P (USAF Courtesy of Farmer); Tallmantz Aviation's KY-L (Oriss)



THE BACKGROUND

Editor's note: The title of the motion picture, according to the press release by Oakmont Productions of Hollywood, California, is *The 1,000 Plane Raid* and is purported to be "... based on fact, of one of the most decisive plans of WW II. It concerns the first of the massive air raids over Germany . . .," and "... employed Maj. Robert Gossman as technical advisor to ensure complete accuracy. Gossman was a member of the 351st squadron of the 8th Air Force."

Finally, again quoting from the press release, "*The 1,000 Plane Raid* is based on the book of the same title by Ralph Barker."

The reason why the producers of this film would use, as its title, the name of a book concerning the Royal Air Force raid over Cologne, Germany, in the night of 30/31 May 1942, escapes credibility. Ralph Barker described in complete and highly interesting detail, the very human stories of the men who made that raid using an assortment of all-British Wellington, Stirling, Whitley, Hampden, Manchester, Halifax and Lancaster aircraft. As a story plot it would require no embellishment; the Hollywood version is, as usual, in the lowest tradition. Admittedly a serious lack of British airplanes would have hampered such an authentic production. A better alternative would have been to select some other title appropriate to the B17s of the 8th Air Force.

DF-A is the call sign for the famed MEMPHIS BELLE, now preserved in the AmVet Memorial in a park in Memphis, Tenn. BUCKING BRONCO is not a known name for an A.A.F. B-17. GK is spurious as far as B-17s are concerned. CAN DO was not used, it is believed, on any B-17, while BALLS OF FIRE was the name of a 12th Air Force B-25 and at least one B-24.

KY was in fact the code of the 366th B.S., 305th B.G. while CAN DO is the post-WW II motto of the 305th Bomb Group, USAF.

The following is known of the individual airplane histories:

The Air Museum's Fortress was B-17G-90-DL, s/n 44-83684, c/n 32325, one of 2,995 made by Douglas Long Beach in WW II. It was modified to a DB-17P and served with the 3205th Drone Sqdn. at Eglin AFB in the 1950's and remained in USAF inventory until 1960. It was procured in 1958 by The Air Museum, assigned N3713G, and used at Chino Airport in the TV series *12 O'Clock High* from 1962-1967 and is now at The Air Museum.

Aviation Specialties, Inc. supplied GK-R, which had been B-17F-70-B0, s/n 42-29782, c/n 4896 and was used as a TB-17F in the AAF. Biegert Bros., Inc. of Shickly, Nebraska had found it in a park in Stuttgart, Arkansas about 1958 and rebuilt it as the first B-17 type to be used for aerial firefighting and spraying, tasks which were performed in the Southeast U. S. Assigned N17W, and 84E of the U. S. Forestry Service Region 5 (California), it was used as an aerial tanker by Abe's Aerial Services of Stafford, Arizona, in 1962. (See *JOURNAL* of the A.A.H.S., Vol. 9, No. 3, Fall, 1964, p. 166 and 170.) It was procured by Aviation Specialties for use in *The 1,000 Plane Raid* and later in *Tora Tora Tora*. As of mid-1969 it was back in Arizona, repainted in Forestry Service specifications except that the camouflage pattern was retained in certain areas.

The Tallmantz Aviation, Inc. Fortress was originally B-17G-85-DL, s/n 44-83525, was delivered to USAAF in 1945, modified to a DB-17P and used by 3205th Drone Sqdn. in 1950 to 1958 period. It went to Davis-Monthan AFB in April 1959 and was on display there or stored until leased to Tallman in early 1968 for five years.

Acknowledgements are due A.A.H.S. Members Steve Birdsall, Bruce Oriss, and Ed Maloney for the above information, in addition to that of the author Jim Farmer.

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