



The Aluminum Overcast, one of only about a dozen B-17s left running, cruised over the Jefferson County Airport west of Denver, its engines throbbing an entirely different tune than the jets of today.

The land north of Denver gave a sharp contrast to the sky looking out over the engines of the old World War II bomber, which was in town for an air show.

Photo by Rachel Smith/The Goodland Star-News

Warbird offers a ride into history

By Rachel Smith

For the Goodland Star-News

I was given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fly in a World War II airplane, and believe me, I was all ready to jump in feet first.

The only fear I had about going to Denver to fly in a piece of history was whether I going to be able to get off from work.

While waiting for my flight at the Jefferson County Airport in Broomfield, I had a chance to relax and visit with pilots from the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association. Most of them where there for a glimpse of one of the few remaining Flying Fortress still approved to fly by Federal Aviation Administration.

At first, I was unsure how I would approach these pilots while we waited, but after a few minutes, we were talking like long-lost friends catching up on events. The pilots and I sat around talking about different planes we had flown in and ones that we would like to go out flying in. They were telling me about the training they had gone through and the instructors they had been taught by to get their pilots license.

One thing that I had to laugh about was most of the pilots carried pictures in their wallets of their planes where most people would carry pictures of their wife and children. To most of the men, their planes were their children.

The Aluminum Overcast, a B-17G Flying Fortress built in 1945, is among less then a dozen of the 12,726 B-17s built during World War II that are still flying today. The Experimental Aircraft Association Aviation Foundation out of Oshkosh, Wis., is the owner and operator of the Aluminum Overcast, which is painted in the colors of the 398th Bomb Group.

Taking my first steps towards this piece of history, I was in total awe of the size and appeal of the massive airplane. The four large Wright Cyclone engines became more impressive the closer I got to them. The only thing more amazing than the mere sight of them was the sound of the four engines firing up.

I had seen movies that portrayed the B-17 but not until I was inside getting ready for takeoff was I fully aware of the untouchable beauty of this airplane. At takeoff, I was in the radio room where the original desk for the radio operator still stood. The fiberglass cover in the radio room was removed, so you could be in the radio room and place your hands in to the sky when the airplane was in flight (even though this was highly discouraged).

Once the airplane was in the air



for our 45-minute flight, the seven newspaper and radio representatives where allowed to move around the airplane, except to the tail gunner position. This was the true highlight: walking across the catwalk above the bomb bay doors, to the cockpit, down to the belly of the airplane where the two guns where set up for the waist gunners. To have free run of the plane and look around at such a large piece of history was a humbling experience.

From 1942 to the end of World War II in 1945, the U.S. 8th Air Force flew B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators in daylight bombing operations against Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe.

The 8th Air Force ended the war with the highest casualty rates of any Allied force. In the process of conducting this bombing cam-

paign, it played a major role in disrupting Germany's war economy and transportation system.

The 8th also participated in the preparation for the invasion of occupied Europe in June 1944 by bombing German missile sites and defenses and by flying special operations to support resistance fighters and Allied ground troops. The pilots also flew humanitarian missions, dropping food and supplies to beleaguered civilians.

All the members of the flight crew and public relations people with the Aluminum Overcast are volunteers that donate their time to showing the world this airplane and the 250 other planes that are stored at Oshkosh. Six members made up the tour crew, two pilots, two mechanics and two public relations people. Most of the men were re-

tired pilots or mechanics for large airplane companies. Randy Hytry from Wisconsin, the tour coordinator for two weeks during this leg of the tour, said he was on summer vacation from his teaching job.

Reporters from around Denver waited (above) to board a special flight by a B-17 bomber, the Aluminum Overcast. Rachel Smith (below) of Oakley, daughter of Dave and Sheila Smith of Goodland, had a chance to take a special flight in one of the few of these planes that still fly.

B-17 bomber facts at glance

Powered by four 1,200-horsepower Wright Cyclone engines.

Weights: Basic empty, 34,000 pounds, loaded, 54,000 pounds.

Fuel Capacity: 1,700 gallons.

Armament: Thirteen .50-caliber machine guns. No gun on the B-17 carried more the one minute's supply of ammunition.

Speeds:
Maximum 300 mph at 30,000 feet.
Cruising 170 mph.
Landing 74 mph.
Rate of climb, 37 minutes to 20,000 feet.

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Board member let out of lawsuit

By Patty Decker

The Colby Free Press

A former Citizens Medical Center board member has been dropped from a lawsuit filed by a Goodland surgeon in November against her and two Colby physicians, but the doctors are still named in the suit.

Dr. Duncan Davis had alleged that Judith Sears, former hospital board member, along with Drs. Raymond Ketting and Victor Hildyard, made false and defamatory statements about him.

Davis charged in his lawsuit that Ketting and Hildyard made public statements that he was the subject of a large number of lawsuits and that he was about to lose his hospital staff privileges. Davis claimed Hildyard and Sears also said officials in Colorado were exhuming the bodies of his patients because of his incompetence and lack of surgical skill.

Davis' attorney, Larry G. Michel, with the law firm of Kennedy, Berkley, Yarnevich and Williamson of Salina, said on Tuesday Sears had been dropped from the lawsuit during discovery. He said he learned statements she made were made to her by a third party and all she had done was repeat something that had been said to her.

Ron Shalz, attorney for Sears, said Friday that he presumed the case against his client was dropped because Davis couldn't win. As a board member, he said, she had a right to talk about one of the doctors.

"Any comments either made in a board meeting or to other trustees are protected under Kansas law under qualified privilege," he said.

In addition to that, he said, each of the hospital trustees signed the same confidentiality agreement everyone with the hospital signs.

Sears said she thought the lawsuit began with a letter to Dr. Davis by another board member.

"As far as I can determine," she said, "the lawsuit was filed by Duncan Davis based on a letter written to him by Vern Schwanke (president of Citizens Medical Center's board) and without the consent of any other trustees."

Sears said she understood Schwanke disclosed conversations that had occurred among trustees and medical staff members at meetings in the board room at the hospital.

She said that Citizens Medical Center is a private organization and any board meetings, board commit-

tee meetings and medical staff meetings are closed to the public.

"There's an aura of confidentiality involved with every trustee," she said, "as well as the chief executive officer, and everyone is required to sign a statement of confidentiality pertaining to what goes on within the confines of the board room and between and among trustees concerning hospital business."

Sears said she found it "fascinating, perplexing and, at times, almost amusing that the board president seemingly was able to pick and choose 'confidentiality' based on his current agenda.

"When board members and/or medical staff members cannot freely discuss hospital business openly and candidly because of inappropriate actions taken by people like Schwanke, the viability and integrity of the institution are at stake," she said.

Schwanke said Sears' statement alleging that he had released confidential information is false.

"There was never any release of confidential information from a meeting to Dr. Davis," Schwanke said. "Public court documents and my deposition will confirm this."

Regarding the lawsuit against Drs. Hildyard and Ketting, Michael O'Neal of Hutchinson, their attorney, talked about the case as well.

"We are taking the position that whatever was said about Dr. Davis was said at a medical staff or quality review meeting," he said. "These meetings are closed meetings, are protected by the peer review privilege and therefore are not the subject of a libel or slander action. We also take the position that what we did say about Dr. Davis in the ... peer review was true."

In defining defamation, O'Neal said, it is a communication to a person or persons of false information tending to expose another person to public hatred, contempt or ridicule or to deprive another person of the benefits of public confidence and social acceptance.

"Therefore, the statements must be public statements," he said. "Where an allegedly defamatory statement is made in good faith on any subject matter which the person communicating has an interest or in reference to which he has a duty and it is made to a person with a corresponding interest or duty (hospital board, credentialing, peer or quality review), the communication constitutes a qualified privilege."

I-70 rollover kills women

Rollover accidents on I-70 near Colby killed two women and sent three to the hospital early Sunday.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Lya N. Ingraham, 33, of Colorado Springs, Colo., and Kieu V. Nguyen, 53, of Moore, Okla. were killed in an accident at mile marker 51, just west of Colby.

Atoddler, 20-month-old Alexandria Ingraham was found alive, saved by a seat belt, and taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby.

The report said the 2001 Kia sport utility was westbound on I-70 and entered the north ditch, came back onto the road, overcorrected into the median and then rolled two to four times before coming to rest on its top. Ingraham and Nguen were thrown from the car and troopers weren't sure who was driving.

The other accident took place on eastbound I-70 about three miles east of Colby.

James Anthony Tyler, 25, Hyattsville, Md., and Kathleen M. Gitay, 28, of Randallstown, Md., were injured when Tyler apparently fell asleep at the wheel of his 1998 Chevy Cavalier.

corrections

The Goodland Star-News will correct any mistake or misunderstanding in a news story. Please call our office at (785) 899-2338 to report errors. We believe that news should be fair and factual. We want to keep an accurate record and appreciate you calling to our attention any failure to live up to this standard.

Colby to offer bluegrass, folk festival this weekend

The Pickin' on the Plains Bluegrass and Folk Festival will take place Friday-Sunday in Colby.

This year, the festival will be held, under a 3,600-square-foot canopy with water-cooled fresh air at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

Eleven bands will perform over the course of the three-day event. Among them will be the Faris Family of Ozawkie, Spontaneous Combustion of Kansas City, High Atmosphere of Colorado Springs, Blue-

stem of Lawrence, Kansas Heart from Wichita, Scenic Roots of Concordia, the New Old-Timers of Hill City, and the Wagoner Family, Sappa Strings, Larry Booth and the McLemore Family, all of the Colby area.

Shows begin at 6 p.m. Friday and run through 2 p.m. Sunday. The festival is family-oriented, with horse and oxen-drawn wagon rides, kids' make-and-take crafts, games, craft fair and food booths on the grounds.

There will also be a youth bluegrass contest at 10 a.m. Saturday and a gospel sing-along at 10 a.m. on Sunday. Tickets are \$18 in advance for adults for the entire weekend, \$10 for youths 12-16, and children under 12 are free with an adult.

Day passes are available at the gate. Advance tickets may be obtained from the Colby Chamber of Commerce, Dave's His Shop, the House of Wood Furniture and City Limits in Colby.

blue cross