



NEWS RELEASE

COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS
MIDLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
P.O. BOX 62000, Midland, Texas 79711-2000
(432) 563-1000, ext. 2231 □ FAX (432) 563-8046
[http: //www.commemorativeairforce.org](http://www.commemorativeairforce.org)
publicrelations@cafhq.org

CONTACT: Kay Crites
Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST; CALL KAY

CRITES AT (432) 567-3007

NR# AS0703

CAF TO INDUCT 7 VETERANS, UNIT INTO HALL OF FAME

MIDLAND, TEXAS – (Sept. 17,2007) –Seven American veterans and a combat unit will be inducted into the Commemorative Air Force’s (CAF’s) American Combat Airman Hall of Fame, Friday, Sept. 28, 2007, at the Midland Center in Midland, Texas.

A vision of CAF founder Lloyd P. Nolen, the Hall of Fame was established in 1997 by the CAF to recognize Americans whose service in the air during any war or conflict reflects credit upon the fighting men and women of the United States. Each year the Hall of Fame induction ceremony precedes the CAF’s annual AIRSHO®. FINA-CAF AIRSHO 2007 is scheduled to take place Sept. 29-30, 2007, at CAF Headquarters adjacent to Midland International Airport in Midland, Texas.

A biographical exhibit of each inductee will be unveiled in conjunction with the banquet on Sept. 28. For those who can’t attend the banquet, the inductee exhibits will be located in the American Airpower Heritage Museum until the construction of the American Combat Airman Hall of

-more-

Combat Airman Hall of Fame

Sept. 17, 2007

Page 2

Fame Gallery, where it will be permanently housed. The exhibit will be on display at the Midland Center for the induction ceremony and dinner.

The inductees for 2007 are: Col Bernard Fisher, Air Force, retired; Maj. George Chandler, Army Air Forces; Flt. Lt. James Gray, RAF; Col. James M. Davis, Air Force, retired; Lt. Cmdr. Don McMillan, Navy, retired; Capt. Norman J. “Dusty” Kleiss, Navy, retired; Maj. William B. Berry, Army Air Forces, and the 325th Fighter Group.

Members and non-members of the CAF make nominations for those to be inducted into the Hall of Fame. A CAF committee makes the final selection of the inductees.

Biographical information on inductees follows.:

Maj. William B. Berry, Air Force Reserves (Ret.)

William Berry enlisted in the Army Air Forces in 1943, becoming a B-25 pilot. On Dec. 10, 1944, Berry awoke with a premonition that his next mission would be his last. Over the target in Northern Italy, heavy flak hit Berry’s airplane, and Berry ordered the surviving crew to bail out and then followed them. Winter in the Alps, alone, with no survival equipment, no food, 250 miles behind enemy lines – this was Berry’s situation. He made contact with a group of remarkably brave individuals, members of the Italian resistance. So quickly did Berry adapt to the Partisan’s life that he was made commander of a 40-man unit on Mount Pizzoc and spent 144 days as a Partisan. For his gallantry and devotion to duty, Berry was awarded the Silver Star.

-more-

Maj. George T. Chandler, Army Air Forces

George Chandler flew the legendary Lockheed P-38 fighter in the Southwest Pacific, becoming an ace. Chandler's most memorable mission occurred as he was above Bougainville leading the second flight of four Lightnings. He could hear the fighter controller vectoring other aircraft to intercept a big Japanese raid of almost 150 airplanes. The Lightnings, flying high cover over the fleet, dove to engage the Japanese fighters. Chandler saw two Zero fighters diving on a transport that was just off-loading troops. The P-38 quickly overtook the Japanese fighters and shot them both down. Among his decorations are the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters.

Col. James M. Davis, Air Force Reserves (Ret.)

Col. Davis was a small young man who was told he was too small for multi-engine bombers. He went on a banana-eating binge (which did no good) but finally convinced all concerned that he could fly the Liberator. Davis' first mission to a factory that produced JU 88 fighter-bombers was typical of the 30 missions he flew – a 3 a.m. wake up; a tasteless breakfast; a briefing for a heavily defended target; perpetual bad weather; fear of mid-air collision during join-ups; intense cold; sudden appearances of German fighters; billowy black clouds of flak; hits on the airplane, which sounded like rocks thrown on a tin roof; anxious moments until bombs away, and then the long flight back to England and safety. Among his decorations is the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters.

Col. Bernard F. Fisher, Air Force (Ret.)

Col. Fisher received the first of 12 Medals of Honor awarded to members of the Air Force during the war in Vietnam. Flying an A-1 Skyraider in close air support for a Special Forces camp under attack by thousands of North Vietnamese regulars, Fisher found a hole in the cloud deck and dove to the attack. Another A-1 was hit and forced to belly land on a badly-damaged runway. Although low on fuel, Fisher landed on the runway that was too short for a Skyraider, and his plane ran off the end. The downed pilot sprinted to Fisher's airplane but could not climb up, so Fisher pulled him headfirst into the cockpit. Among his decorations are the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with eight oak leaf clusters representing 200 combat missions in Vietnam, American Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal.

Flt. Lt. James A. Gray, Royal Air Force

James Gray volunteered with the Royal Air Force. After training, his squadron was the first Eagle Squadron to become operational. Gray's first aerial victory occurred while providing air cover for a rescue operation in the North Sea. His squadron was jumped by Focke Wulf FW 190s. One FW 190 positioned itself behind a Spitfire being flown by Gray's wing leader, but Gray shot it down. He claimed a further four aerial victories which, by circumstance, were unconfirmed. On his 26th birthday, Gray was shot down and captured. He spent the remainder of the war in Stalag-Luft I, north of Berlin. With more than 400 combat hours, Gray had more flying hours than any other Eagle Squadron pilot. Among his decorations is the prestigious British Distinguished Flying Cross.

-more-

Capt. Norman J. “Dusty” Kleiss, Navy (Ret.)

Norman J. “Dusty” Kleiss would find himself playing a key role in the most important naval battle of World War II – Midway in 1942. Kleiss first saw action in a series of hit-and-run raids on Japanese installations, resulting in his receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross. On June 4, 1942, Kleiss launched off the *USS Enterprise* and located the carrier *Kaga*. The ensuing attack turned *Kaga* into a blazing inferno. Later that day Kleiss and six other SBDs sank the carrier *Hiryu*. The next day Kleiss led his section of three Dauntlesses against the heavy cruisers, *Mogami* and *Mikuma*. Repeated hits caused *Mikuma* to sink and *Mogami* was severely damaged. For his role in these actions around Midway, Kleiss received the Navy Cross.

Cmdr. Don W. McMillan, Navy Reserve (Ret.)

Don McMillan’s first assignment was as an Avenger torpedo bomber pilot. He took part in strikes on Guam, Iwo Jima, Mindanao, Chichi Jima, Taiwan and Okinawa, flying off the *USS Lexington*. McMillan played a key role in the destruction of the last carriers in the Japanese navy during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. On Oct. 25, 1944, McMillan and VT-19 came in low to deliver torpedoes into the side of the carrier *Zuikaku*, one of the Japanese carriers that participated in the Pearl Harbor attack. Despite extremely heavy anti-aircraft fire, at least five torpedoes struck the *Zuikaku* and within an hour, she sank. For his bravery in pressing home the attack on *Zuikaku*, McMillan was awarded the Navy Cross.

352nd Fighter Group, Army Air Forces

Flying P-47 Thunderbolts and later, P-51 Mustangs, the 352nd became one of the most successful and highly-decorated fighter squadrons in World War II. The group flew nearly 60,000 combat hours in 19 months; claimed 519 aerial victories and produced 29 aces.

The most memorable event in the history of the 352nd occurred on New Year's Day 1945 when the Luftwaffe launched an attack on 16 Allied airfields. Suspecting an early-morning raid, the group's Mustangs were warming up on the runway when the first German fighters roared in.

During the ensuing melee, nearly 30 Luftwaffe fighters were claimed downed without loss to the Allies. For their actions that day, three of the group's pilots received the Distinguished Service Cross and four others received Silver Stars.