

NEW MYSTERY LIBERATOR

AS ANOTHER MEMORIAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL B-24 IS DISCOVERED, ANSWERS ARE STILL SOUGHT TO FILL IN THE HISTORICAL RECORD

BY NICHOLAS A. VERONICO

Two additional mystery Consolidated B-24 Liberators have been identified and added to the list of bombers that served at technical schools or as memorials after World War II. Following the March 2021 issue's "More Mystery Liberators" story, reader Tom Kirk of Meadville, Pennsylvania, wrote-in identifying the memorial B-24 with number 27 on the nose as Ford Willow Run-built RB-24E 42-7127. The airframe has been identified, now we

need to know where this aircraft was displayed. It was obviously cared for as the paint scheme was changed after the bomber became a memorial and while on display. Can another reader help?

Also, among the mystery Liberators is the late model B-24 that went to the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics. Photos of the bomber at the school were shown in the "More Mystery Liberators"

article, but there has been no indication of a serial number. Does anyone have any leads?

NEW MYSTERY B-24

While researching another aircraft, a photo of a B-24 Liberator on final approach to Hastings, Nebraska, on 6 August 1945, attracted attention. The date of the photo was, coincidentally, the same day the B-29 *Enola Gay* dropped the atomic bomb *Fat Man* on



Reader Tom Kirk of Meadville, Pennsylvania, identified number 27 as Ford-built RB-24E 42-7217, and that it wore the name *Lil Quaker* when serving as a memorial. Notice the fuselage cut-out under the waist window.

the city of Hiroshima, Japan. This Liberator was being delivered to the aviation and engineering program at Hastings College, Hastings, Nebraska. In addition to its role as a teaching aid, this B-24, obtained during in the closing days of WWII, was displayed as a memorial to those who served in that global conflict.

The Hastings B-24 has been added to the list of Liberators that served at schools and as memorials

after the war (see Table One: *School and Memorial B-24 Liberators*), bringing the total to 15. That number is exactly half the number of B-17 Flying Fortresses known to have been obtained for schools and memorials.

The Liberator that landed at Hastings Airport was B-24E-10 USAAF 42-7111. The bomber was built at Ford's Willow Run, Michigan-factory, and delivered to the Army Air Forces on

8 April 1943. After receiving combat modifications at Birmingham, Alabama, 42-7111 arrived at Kelly Field, Texas, on 1 August 1943, for a short stay. One week later, 42-7111 flew to Newark, New Jersey. Here it was redesignated an RB-24E and was soon headed west as it was assigned to the 2525th Base Unit at Liberal, Kansas, a four-engine aircraft pilot school. RB-24E 42-7111 spent the rest of the



RB-24E 42-7111 shortly after arrival at the Hastings Municipal Airport. Note the smartly dressed crowd on hand to inspect the new arrival. Prior to the B-24's arrival, the largest plane that had landed at Hastings was a B-25 Mitchell. (*Hastings Daily Tribune*)