

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: 44-83814

NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM
WASHINGTON, D.C.

44-83814 B-17G-95-DL to N66751 to CF-HBP to N66751

USAAF

DATE	LOCATION	UNIT	CMD	REMARKS
20 JUN 45	LONG BEACH		ATC	ACCEPTED
22 JUN 45	SYRACUSE		ATC	STORAGE
(12 OCT 45)	(declared excess)		--	
05 NOV 45	ALTUS		RFC	DISPOSAL

CIVIL

DATE	TRANSFER DETAILS
47	FR: WAR ASSETS ADMINISTRATION TO: NORTH DAKOTA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT NO.3 HAZEN, ND
20 JUN 51	TO: CALIFORNIA-ATLANTIC AIRWAYS, ST. PETERSBURG, FL
12 MAY 53	TO: KENTING AVIATION, TORONTO, CANADA
15 MAY 57	TO: PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY CORPORATION, TORONTO, CANADA
11 FEB 60	TO: HUNTING SURVEY CORPORATION, TORONTO, CANADA
09 APR 62	TO: KENTING AVIATION, TORONTO, CANADA
03 DEC 68	TO: KENTING LTD., TORONTO, CANADA
06 MAY 69	TO: KENTING AIRCRAFT, TORONTO, CANADA
01 APR 71	TO: ARNOLD KOLB, DBA BLACK HILLS AVIATION, ALAMOGORDO, NM
20 MAR 74	TO: BLACK HILLS AVIATION, ALAMOGORDO, NM
19 JAN 81	TO: NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

44-83814

44-83814 was one of the few Fortresses to escape the immediate post-war scrapyards, enter the civil market, and survive through the ensuing years. Initially registered as N66571, the B-17 was sold to a Canadian survey firm in 1953 but returned to the U.S. for use as an air tanker beginning in 1971. In 1981 it was traded to the National Air and Space Museum and is presently in long-term storage at Dulles International Airport in Washington D.C.

As were many of the Fortresses which survived into the post-war period, 44-83814 was in the last block of Douglas-produced B-17s built at Long Beach. Accepted for service on 20 June 1945, it was flown directly to Syracuse, New York and placed in short term storage. It was declared excess to

military requirements on 12 October 1945 and flown to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation disposal lot at Altus, Oklahoma, arriving in early November 1945. 44-83814 remained at Altus until late 1947 when the North Dakota Public School District Number 3 obtained the aircraft for an unspecified purpose. Though not confirmed by aircraft records, it is likely the arrangements provided that the B-17 was donated to the School District for instructional purposes but title was not transferred. The government did not release its interest in the aircraft and specified that it was not to fly again. A fair number of B-17s and other types were similarly placed on display in communities or made available for use at technical institutions.

Difficulties would ensue, however, in subsequent years as communities and schools sought to dispose of what had

become eyesores or liabilities. Many local jurisdictions assumed they owned the aircraft and attempted to sell them on the civil market. It often required years of litigation and eventual cash settlements made to the federal government to gain clear title.

It is not evident from the record the actual use 44-83814 was put to with the North Dakota School District Number 3, but the aircraft was probably flown to Hazen, North Dakota from Altus and remained until 1951. In any event, the Fortress was purchased from the District by Owen F. Williams of California-Atlantic Airways of St. Petersburg, Florida.

Williams apparently made good use of the brewing confusion about legal title and purchased five B-17s from institutions who, it later turned out, didn't actually legally own the airplanes. Nonetheless, Williams was able to register his airplanes with the Civil Aeronautics Administration in a block of numbers between N66568 and N66574 (with the exception of N66569 and N66572 which were applied to other California-Atlantic Airways aircraft). N66571 was applied to 44-83814.

Williams was able to neatly sidestep the title problem by selling N66571 to a Canadian survey company located in Toronto, Canada. Sold to the Kenting Aviation Company, N66571 was given the Canadian registration of CF-HBP. Based at Oshawa, CF-HBP arrived on 12 May 1953 with 855 hours of flight time logged on the airframe. It would eventually be joined by two additional B-17s, CF-ICB (B-17E 41-9210) and CF-JJH (B-17G-95-DL 44-83873).

Kenting Aviation employed CF-HBP in a variety of projects over the years which included air survey operations in the Canadian arctic and around the world. It was also reportedly used in support of construction of the Distant Early Warning Line in Canada and Greenland in 1955. Registration records indicate ownership was transferred to Photographic Survey Corporation of Toronto on 15 May 1957 and then to the Hunting Survey Corporation of Toronto on 11 February 1960 before returning to Kenting Aviation on 09 April 1962. It is not known if ownership actually

transferred to different companies or if these firms operated as subsidiary units to Kenting Aviation. CF-HBP remained active on the Canadian aircraft register until 01 April 1971 when it was sold to Arnold Kolb of Alamogordo, New Mexico. CF-HBP was deleted from the Canadian registry on 16 April 1971.

The FAA reassigned 44-83814 its original registration number of N66571. Kolb operated Black Hills Aviation at Spearfish, South Dakota and later at Alamogordo, New Mexico, and owned a number of B-17s, including N66573 (B-17G-55-BO 42-102715), N73648 (B-17G-95-DL 44-83864), and N6694C (B-17G-110-VE 44-85813*), all of which he employed as air tankers. Kolb put N66571 right to work after making necessary modifications to an air tanker configuration. N66571 remained active as a tanker through 1981 when Kolb finally traded his B-17 to the National Air and Space Museum for a pair of surplus Navy P-2s (SP-2H BuNo 144681 and SP-2H BuNo 150282) from Davis-Monthan AFB.

Ownership was transferred on 19 January 1981 at Davis-Monthan AFB. N66571 was stripped of paint and had its original military serial number applied before being placed on temporary display at the Pima Air Museum near Davis-Monthan AFB.

44-83814 remained at Pima until April 1984 when the NASM arranged to have Kolb and his son fly the bomber to Dulles International via Alamogordo, New Mexico. At Dulles, the NASM prepared it for long-term outdoor storage into which the Fortress was placed in July 1984.

Future plans for the B-17 are uncertain. Lacking suitable display space, plans are underway to construct an annex facility at Dulles to supplement the main NASM building in Washington D.C. The NASM also owns the historically significant "Swoose" (B-17D 40-3097*) which is in long-term indoor storage with no restoration scheduled. It is hoped that if the new annex is constructed the NASM will place on display both its B-17D and B-17G as prime examples of American aviation at its best.



N66571 operating as an air tanker with Black Hills Aviation on duty at Omack, Washington in 1978. Note cargo door at left waist position. *Patzer*