

# Pearson donates 381st Bomb and Shield

Military historian donates bomb reproduction to Vandenberg Air Force Base

By Eric Keith/ St. Joseph News-Press - Sunday, November 7, 1999

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Military historian Kevin Pearson has donated a reproduction he made of a bomb and shield to the 381st Combat Training Command at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

Kevin, who has written two books and is working on a third, studies the history of the U.S. Eighth Air Force and its involvement in defeating Hitler's Germany during World War II.

He made a reproduction of a bomb and shield that was in the Officer's Club at the 381st Bombardment Group (Heavy) at Ridgewell, England, during World War II.

Kevin says the bomb he used in the reproduction is an original 1942, 250-pound practice bomb made by the Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) Munitions Works. The shield was cut from 8-gauge aluminum.

He has a picture of the original bomb and shield that hung in the Officer's Club at Ridgewell, and he had all of the paint computer matched. The red pigment had to be ordered from India.

The 381st Combat Training Command at Vandenberg AFB somehow found out about the bomb and shield [the 381st.org editor notes here that he in fact contacted the 381st TRG about the replica bomb & shield] and asked Kevin if he'd donate it.

He said he would be honored to do so.

"The bomb/shield and event is really something terrific," says Capt. Edmund Bohn at Vandenberg.

A formal ceremonial dinner for the reproduction's unveiling will be Nov. 12, [1999] he says. So far 12 surviving 381st veterans have confirmed for the event, he added.

Edmund says the purpose of the evening is to have a Heritage Dining-In.



"We want the current members of the 381st Training Group to understand just how rich a heritage we have. We wear the same patch as our former members who flew B-17 missions from England during World War II," Edmund says.

Kevin is the secretary for the Missouri Chapter of the St. Louis Wing of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. He also works at the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce as the vice president of business development.

In his work on his current book, a field guide to sites in England, Kevin says he visited Ridgewell and stood on the hearth below where the original bomb and shield hung.

"For me, that's about as exciting as it gets," he says.