

By **KENT DINNEBIER**

Five lucky individuals will have a once in a lifetime opportunity to step back in history during Fly Iowa 2005, to be held in Clarinda on Sept. 10-11.

On Saturday afternoon, Sept. 10, a raffle will be held to select five people to take a ride on a B-17 Bomber that will be on display during the Fly Iowa air show.

“These five lucky people will be transported back in history for a period of time on Saturday afternoon. The five people selected for this unbelievable ride will be able to go about the aircraft after takeoff and look out as the crew did flying over Germany during World War II in this magnificent bomber,” Fly Iowa Air Show Coordinator Steve Mowery said.

Profits from the raffle to select the five people to ride on the B-17 will be used to help defer the immense expense of bringing historic aircraft like this to the Fly Iowa air show.

The B-17 Bomber that will be on display in Clarinda is owned and operated by the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) of Galveston, Texas. CAF is a non-profit organization that has taken on the responsibility of restoring and maintaining the last remaining World War II aircraft, affectionately known as Warbirds, so new generations can enjoy the majesty and awesome power these aircraft possess.

“One problem is that these aircraft are over 60-years-old and it is extremely costly to maintain these planes and keep them in top notch flying condition. Therefore, the CAF passes these costs on to the air show hosts. These costs along with the fuel that these engines drink make it prohibitive for most air shows to have these rare Warbirds. The Fly Iowa Committee decided early on that this type of aircraft was needed to do justice to the type of show that we felt the community deserved,” Mowery explained.

Tickets for this raffle went on sale June 30, at a cost of \$10 apiece. The tickets are available at Clarinda Hy-Vee, Page County State Bank, Bank Iowa, Clarinda City Hall and the Clarinda Chamber of Commerce. Tickets will also be available on the day of the Fly Iowa festivities.

While the raffle will help defer some of the cost of hosting Fly Iowa 2005, Mowery explained the local committee has also been seeking various corporate and private sponsors, as well as recruiting volunteers to assist with organizing the festivities and working during the event.

“The Fly Iowa Committee is asking for help in putting on this historic endeavor. Due to the complexity and cost of procuring aircraft for the upcoming extravaganza, we are in need of volunteers, or if you would rather, make a tax-deductible contribution and become a sponsor. By working together we can make this a successful community event that we can all be proud of,” Mowery explained.

To volunteer to assist with Fly Iowa 2005, or to make a tax-deductible contribution, people may contact Clarinda City Manager Gary Walter at 712-542-2136. The Clarinda Foundation, located at 213 E Washington St., is also accepting donations.

Over 12,000 B-17 Bombers, commonly referred to as the “Flying Fortress”, were built between 1935 and 1945. However, Thunderbird, the name of the B-17 Bomber that will be in Clarinda, is one of only six such bombers still in flight condition.

The B-17 received the name “Flying Fortress” from a Seattle reporter who commented on its defensive power. During World War II, the B-17 Bomber was used primarily in Europe. Bombers associated with the Eighth Air Force participated in countless missions from bases in England. These missions often lasted for more than eight hours and struck at targets deep within enemy territory.

Because of their long-range capability, formations of B-17 Bombers often flew into battle with no fighter escort, relying on their own defensive capabilities to insure a successful mission.

Thunderbird was actually built in 1945 and was equipped with four radial engines producing close to 5,000 horsepower with turbochargers. It was capable of flying above 30,000 feet, dropping over 30 500-pound bombs at speeds of over 250 miles per hours with a range of over 2,000 miles. It also carried 13 50-caliber machine guns to defend itself from the relentless attacks made by enemy fighters.

Owned by the French, Thunderbird was also used to perform high altitude mapping over Europe before being purchased by the CAF in 1987 and returning to the United States.

Following a three and one-half year restoration project, the B-17 was featured in the motion pictures “Memphis Belle” and “The Tuskegee Airmen” before being selected as an Oshkosh Award Winner at the Airventure air show held annually in Oshkosh, Wis.

Today, Thunderbird flies about 100 hours per year and annually attends about 20 air shows.

