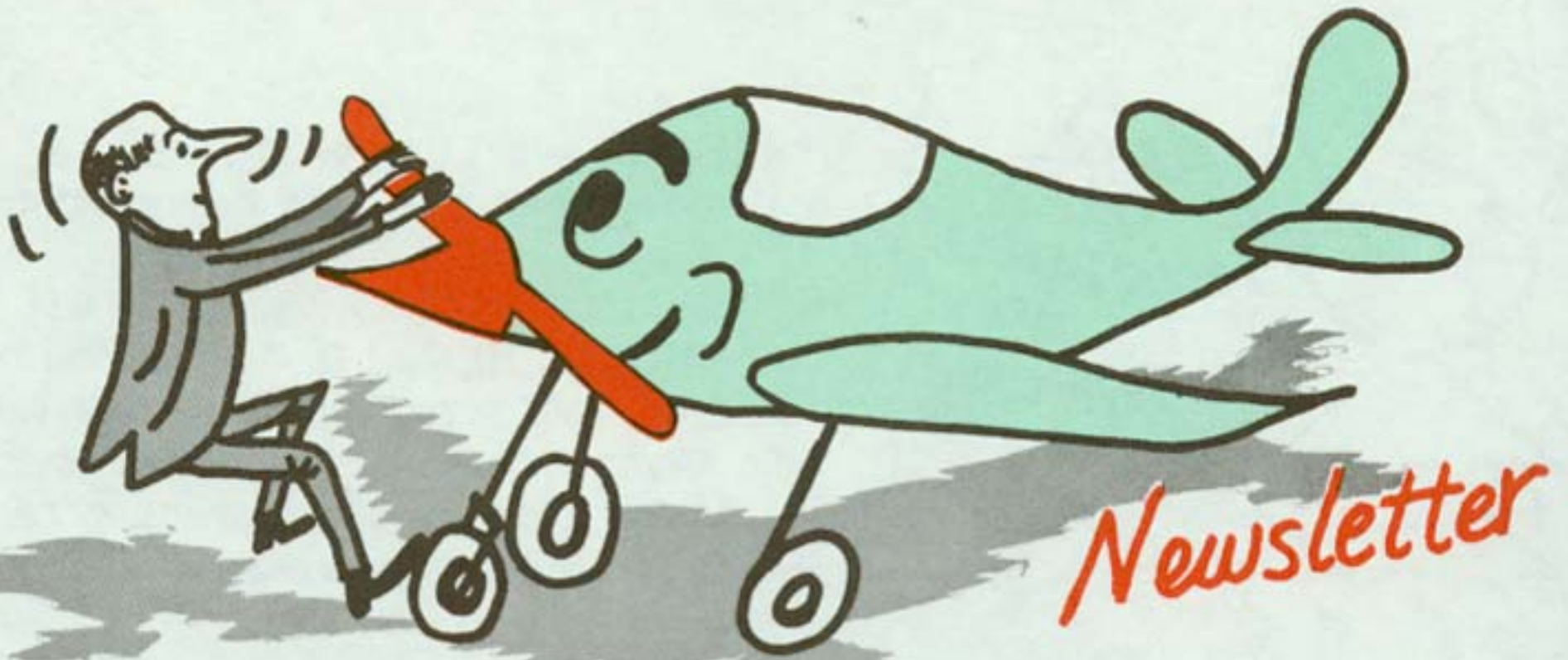


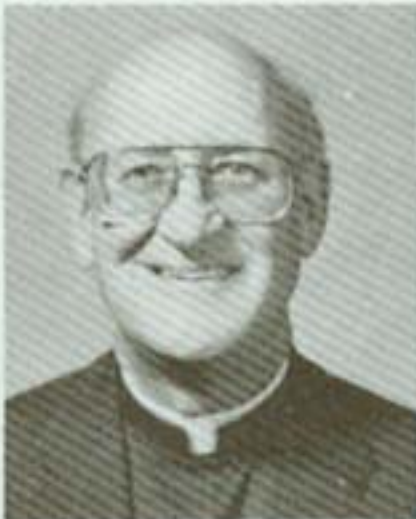
N.A.P.P.



VOLUME XVI

JUNE 1989

NO. 6



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

It will not be long now! Boston, here we come! If you've not said "YES" this is the time to do it! Our hosts have done a lot of planning. It looks good! We from the South expect to ride up in a Piper Navajo if all goes well.

Archbishop Hurley writes that he will not make it this year because of a proposed trip to Russia. He will tell us about it next year as we make our flights to Anchorage. He suggests we time our 1990 Convention for after mid-July to take into account the fish runs.

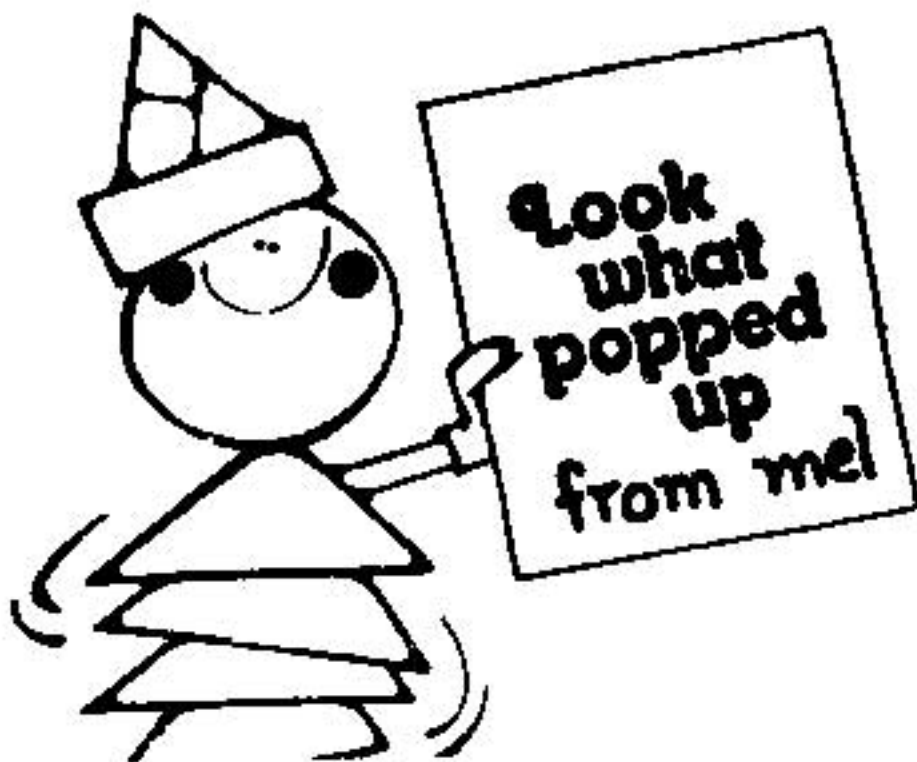
NAPPER-Father Philip Thoni is out of the Army. We hope he can join us at our meetings. Our sympathy to Fr. Joe Brando who lost his father recently. Joe will soon leave for Army chaplain duty.

Congratulations to Fr. John Dompka on the celebration of his 40th anniversary of ordination. We just celebrated the 50th of Msgr. George Rohling, our pastor emeritus at St. Henry's. His life story was published in a book "Yes, Lord." The Joyful Journey of an American Priest. It validates the promise of happiness to a priest who lives his vocation. At 76 he is still going strong. Gosh! Very encouraging.

See you in Boston!

Bill

Bill Bevington



If all goes well you will find the following items in this newsletter:

1. *An article from the HAWAII CATHOLIC HERALD. It is the never before told story by the pilot who flew Fr. Damien's body from the leper colony in 1935. One hundred years after his death it is finally released.*

2. **The final notification about the Boston NAPP Convention. If you haven't already registered, please do so soon.**

3. *An NAPP family affair. John was recently promoted to full Colonel in the Iowa National Guard and is now head chaplain for the Iowa Guard. Ev has been appointed to the NCCB's committee on Priestly Life and Ministry and attended his first meeting June 13 and 14 at Seton Hall. Meanwhile I sit back and hope they don't screw things up too badly*

4. **If they are completed in time I will bring the 1989 Directory to the Convention. I found out last year it sure saves a lot of postage. There'll also be NAPP hats if you don't have one..**



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Hawaii Catholic Herald

Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Honolulu

"Information, inspiration"

VOL. LII, NO. 14

FRIDAY, APRIL 14, 1989

35 CENTS

Dear Reader,

The late Col. Phillips Melville was the U.S. Army bomber pilot stationed at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor given the duty to transport Damien's body from his grave in Kalawao, Molokai, to Honolulu on the first leg of its journey back to Belgium in 1935. Not a Catholic, the event was one of the most memorable in his pilot's career.

He wrote this account 20 years after that flight when he had retired as an artist and writer. Father Patrick Logan, SS,CC., who gave the final farewell to the body at that time and who also served at Kalaupapa, had helped edit the article.

The story was given to Irene Latoto, curator of the Damien Museum in Waikiki, by William deGrove Carter of Delray Beach, Florida, in the hopes that she would find a publisher.

Along with the story, Carter sent a letter from a retired British officer to Col. Melville in which was stated: "It seems to me a little sad that you cannot publish it until 1988." "I remember," wrote Carter, "that my uncle once told me that the Catholic Church did not want him to publish the article until 100 years after Father Damien's death." However, he said that he found nothing in the Colonel's files that would explain or confirm this.

He did say that "Colonel Melville was very proud of having flown Father Damien's remains to Honolulu from Molokai" and that he hoped Damien would become a saint in his lifetime so he could be "the only man alive ever to have flown a saint." This is the first time his story has been published.

REFLECTION

By Father Edwin J. Duffy

"I pray and pray but God never seems to answer my prayers," a young lady complained. "Perhaps he has," I rejoined. "Maybe he has said 'no' or 'not right now.' Since he sees the future you might be asking for something neither good for you or another. Our ways are not His ways. He tells us. But He does hear your prayers. Perhaps He might be testing your perseverance. In the parable of the unjust judge Jesus tells us we must always pray and not lose heart. St. Paul says, 'Do not grow slack—be patient under trial, persevere in prayer.' Take one day at a time," I said.

Father Duffy is pastor emeritus of St. Pius X Church in Manoa.

A first-person account by the pilot who flew Damien's body out of Kalaupapa

Sweet Chariot

By Colonel Phillips Melville

In 1935, 47 years after Father Damien de Veuster was buried by the church he built in Kalawao, Molokai, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts asked the Territorial government of Hawaii for permission to remove his body for return to his native Belgium and interment in the Sanctuary of the Society at Louvain. This request was granted but not without some protest.

In response to the personal intercession of King Albert of Belgium, the U.S. Government undertook to provide transportation for Damien's remains from the Hawaiian Islands through the Panama canal (after a stop in San Francisco). On the Atlantic side of the canal, they were to be transferred to a Belgian training ship headed for Antwerp. The only problem was transporting the remains from the Kalaupapa settlement to Honolulu. In earlier days this would not have been easy, for the small peninsula on the northern coast

of Molokai on which the settlement is located, was accessible only by small boat at a landing place which sometimes cannot be used for days at a time. The alternative was the long, narrow and dangerous trail which ascends the nearly vertical face of the "Pali" or cliff that separates the settlement from the rest of the island. The coming of the airplane solved this problem, for there was an excellent, natural

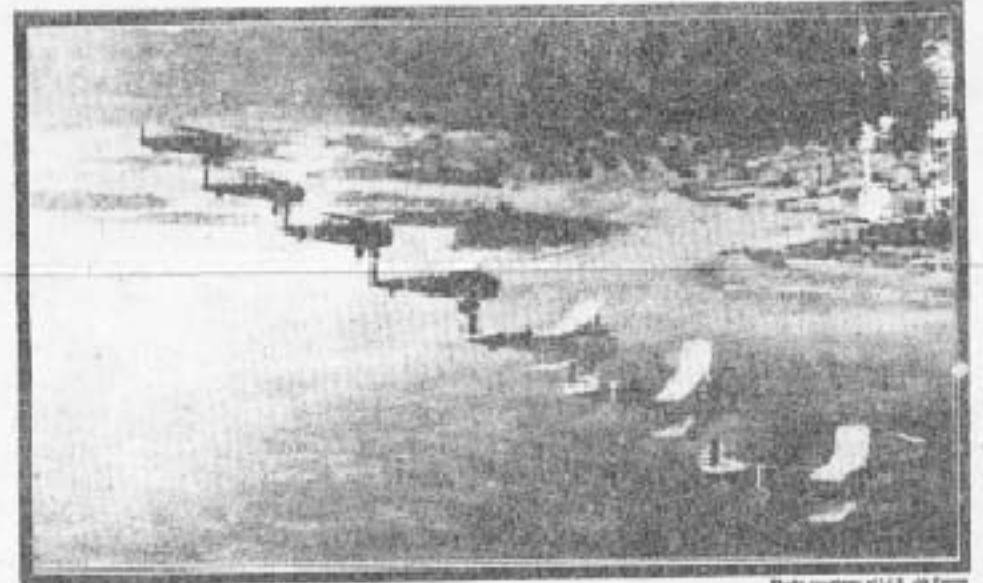
landing strip at the tip of the peninsula. The Army Air Corps was given the task of bringing Father Damien to Honolulu. Specifically, it was given to the Commanding Officer of the 5th Composite Group, based at that time on Ford Island

The only unusual feature of the flight from my point of view was that of having a Catholic bishop, helmeted, be-goggled, and wearing a parachute, seated beside me in the place of a co-pilot.

in Pearl Harbor. As Operations Officer of the Group, it was my duty to make all arrangements for the flight. I was also designated to conduct it. Three bombers and several smaller aircraft were required to fly the Government officials, Consular representatives, ecclesiastics and others to Molokai for the exhumation proceedings. All arrived in good order and the

only unusual feature of the flight from my point of view was that of having a Catholic bishop, the Most Rev. Stephen Alencastre, helmeted, be-goggled, and wearing a parachute, seated beside me in the place of a co-pilot. The date was January 27, 1936.

Such transportation as the settlement could provide was already waiting to take us to Kalawao. The road which led across the flank of a long extinct volcano was rough, and our old Ford "Model A" rattled and squeaked in protest at the racking it was forced to undergo. Personal discomfort was disregarded, however, at the sight of the Molokai Pali spread in a magnificent panorama before us, from a point 14 miles distant on our right, to where it faded beneath the somber shadows of



Seven Keystone B-6A "Panther" bombers, like the one the author flew to Kalaupapa, fly seaward of Honolulu Harbor in 1932



Damien's resting place before his remains were sent back to Belgium.

Continued from page 1

clouds that leaned against the mountainous windward shore far to our left. Engrossed in this view, I had not noticed our approach to the settlement until we suddenly confronted a green oasis of ironwood trees that swayed in the strong trade wind and revealed in a shifting pattern of sunlight and shadow, a scattered group of frame cottages. Before these, its square tower gleaming white in the sun, stood the little church that was our destination. Thankful to stretch our stiffened limbs, we dismounted and joined a small group of persons already gathered in the churchyard.

Samson on the wall

Extending from side-to-side a short distance in front of the church stood a breast-high wall of rough lava rock. I was astonished, presently, to see Bishop Alencastre, my passenger on the flight from Honolulu, trying to climb this wall with difficulty on account of his long cassock. It was then I noticed the people standing in the shadows of the trees beyond. The Bishop finally gained a precarious footing atop the wall, and turning toward this gathering, began to speak. I was too far away to hear his words, but the up-turned faces of the crowd of a hundred or more persons, who appeared representative of the mixed population of the Hawaiian Islands, revealed that he had captured their attention. Although it was not noticeable at that distance, I realized that these people had something else in common besides an interest in the speaker: they were all leprosy patients.

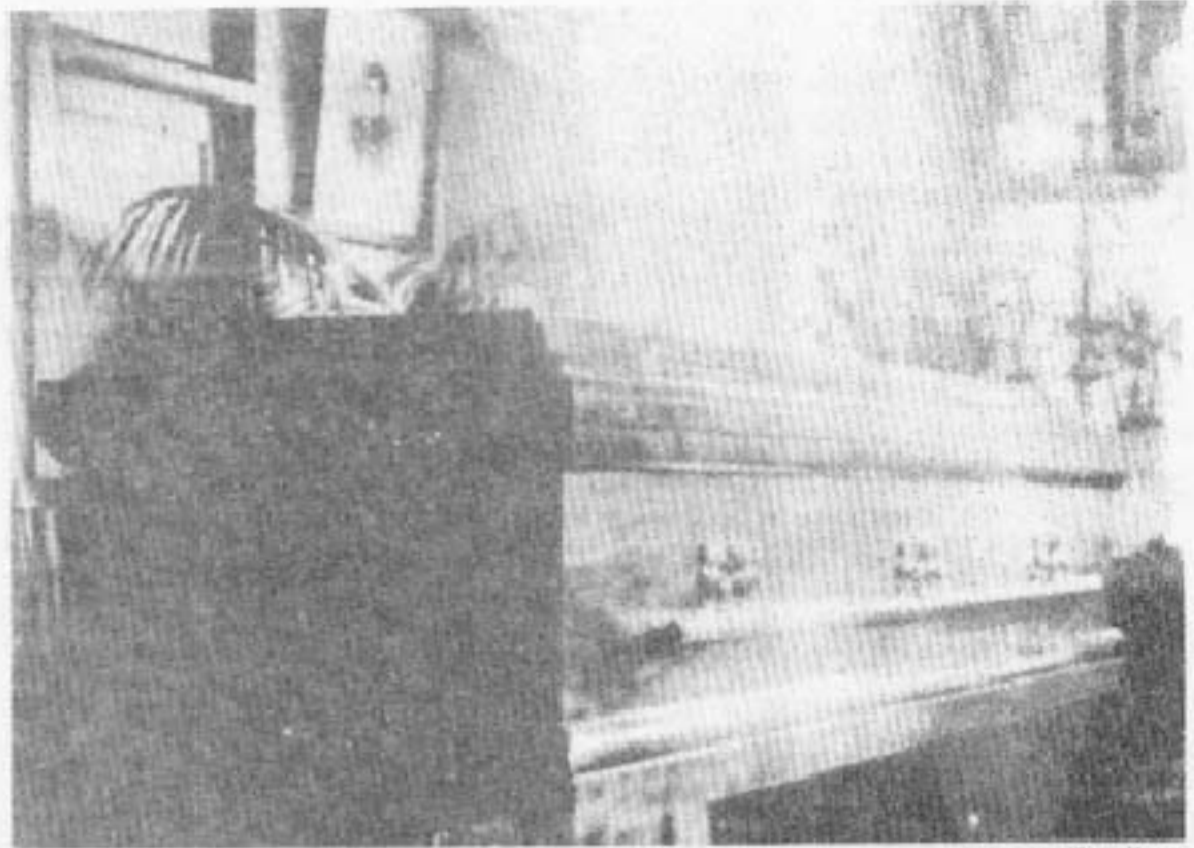
The group in the churchyard had been swelled by late arrivals until it now numbered 20 or 30 persons. I assumed these must be representatives of the Territorial Government, consular personnel and others who had some function connected with the proceedings. Much in evidence were a dozen or more Fathers of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts, who had come from their distant posts throughout the islands for this extraordinary occasion. I had been told that these priests were entirely dependent on the generosity of their congregations, and it seemed that the living in some cases was poor indeed, for the robes of many were soiled and in disrepair. Subsequently I learned that many of these men had made their way across the island afoot in the early dawn and had descended the long and difficult trail from the top of the Pali near Kalaupapa, for which reason they had wisely worn their oldest cassocks.

The Bishop concluded his speech, descended the wall and joined the group in the churchyard. The attention of all present was now directed to the activities of several men who busied themselves about a simple grave in the shadow of the church. Presently they came for-

ward bearing a long object which the sunlight revealed to be an aged, wooden coffin. They set their burden carefully on a trestle before us, and it was immediately surrounded by the group of visitors. I had remained in the background thus far, but curiosity overcame diffidence and I moved closer. At that moment several of those about the coffin moved aside, leaving me an unobstructed view. I found that I was standing at the foot of the coffin from which the lid had been removed. Within it lay a skeletal form, partly concealed beneath the remnants of a dark robe which appeared to have been drenched with liquid. From the head of the coffin a denuded and blackened skull gazed back at me with empty eyes. These pitiful remains were all that was yet mortal of Father Damien of Molokai.

The formalities of identification were soon completed, and the group of officials melted away. A number of the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts still lingered about the coffin, however, as though they hoped to draw some spiritual virtue from its nearness, as in the case of the venerated relics which are preserved in many churches and cathedrals in Europe. Steps were now taken to prepare the coffin for its flight to Honolulu. The lid was replaced on the coffin, and a large and handsome packing case of native Koa wood was brought forward in which it was enclosed. When all was in readiness, the heavy case was raised by many strong arms and carried slowly toward the entrance to the churchyard. As the pallbearers moved forward with their burden, the residents beyond the wall began to sing. The words of their hymn, or lament, were Hawaiian and the air was strange to me. It was singing such as no visitor in Honolulu would ever hear, and under the circumstances was sad, and extremely moving. The singing continued as the bearers passed through the gate and as they loaded the case aboard a panel truck waiting beyond. It ended only when the truck moving slowly off, was lost to view.

I'm not superstitious, but... We now hurried to our Model A, parked behind the church, as we were anxious to reach the landing strip before the truck which was going by way of Kalaupapa, a better though longer route. Our road was no better going in the opposite direction and I was glad to dismount beside my plane, a Keystone B-6 bomber, at the head of the line of aircraft. Ten minutes later the panel truck came into view. Though I am not superstitious, merely observing such practical conventions as not walking under ladders and the like, I was not at all happy at the prospect of being the driver of an aerial hearse and entertained the hope that some other pilot, one who was of the Catholic Faith, might come forward and request the privilege of flying Damien to Honolulu. None did, and the truck was waved forward to my plane. It took many strong backs to remove the heavy case from



Damien coffin rests at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace before being put on a ship for Belgium

From the head of the coffin a denuded and blackened skull gazed back at me with empty eyes.

the truck, raise it into the open bomb-bay of the airplane, and hold it there until it had been securely lashed in place with many feet of new Manila rope that had been brought for this purpose. When the loading was completed, inspected and pronounced satisfactory, I climbed into the pilot's cockpit. As I took my seat, I discovered that my misgivings had evaporated. Instead I had come the realization that I was the recipient of a unique honor.

To my relief each of the two big Cyclone engines of the Keystone bomber fired up at the first engagement of the starter. As they had performed perfectly on the flight to Molokai, I ran them up briefly as I checked instruments and controls. Everything was in order so I signalled the crew-chief to pull the chocks. We then taxied slowly back to the extreme end of the field to take full advantage of the 1800 feet of hard turf available, a habit born of experience in the days when aircraft engines were less reliable. But there was no doubt that the big, lightly loaded bomber would jump off quickly against the trade wind which was blowing at fully 25 knots. The engines responded with a healthy roar as I opened the throttles, and accelerating rapidly, we sped down the field. We had covered barely a thousand feet when an unevenness in the ground bounced us into the air, and we stayed. Holding the plane level to build flying speed, I waited until the lava outcropping at the end of the strip disappeared under the nose, and then pulled up into a sharp climb.

Boosted by the up-draft over the shore, we went up like a balloon.

The final farewell

It seemed only proper that as Father Damien took his final departure from the scene of his labors to allow the people at Kalawao an opportunity to wave farewell to their departing hero. Accordingly, I levelled off at 500 feet and began a moderately banked turn to the right. As the strong wind swept us with increasing speed sideways, due to the low altitude, I received the dizzy impression of being in an uncontrolled side-slip. An anxious glance at the turn indicator showed this was untrue, but for a few moments it was more comfortable to fly on instruments. When I looked up we had nearly completed a 180 degree turn and with the added speed of the wind were hurtling directly toward the Pali. With a sudden vision of being swept to destruction against it I banked steeply to tighten the turn. Even as I did so I perceived that this, too, was an optical illusion, born of the bright sunlight, clear air, and the height of the immense cliff towering fully 2,000 feet above us. In fact, the Pali was nearly a mile distant. The church with its square tower was easily located, and keeping this at the center of our orbit we spiralled upward. As we completed the second turn we drew level with the crest where the rolling hills of western Molokai stretched to an abrupt horizon.

I now levelled off and throttling to cruising speed, took up a heading for Honolulu 50 miles away. I happened to glance at the climb indicator and was astonished to see that we were still gaining al-

titude at over a thousand feet a minute. This was confirmed by the altimeter which was steadily moving upward. It was evident that we were in the grip of the powerful updraft of the trade wind where it shot skyward to surmount this obstacle to its westward passage. Expecting momentarily to encounter severe turbulence, I took a firmer grip on the wheel. The plane continued to fly onward as steadily as in a calm.

Across the channel

As we sped across the channel that separates the islands of Molokai and Oahu, I glanced down at the heaving waters churned by the wind and currents as they funnel between the islands and was thankful to be riding smoothly at 3,000 feet instead of aboard a boat in the maelstrom below. We made our landfall where Makapuu lighthouse stuck its head through a fringe of cloud and in a few minutes Honolulu opened out before us. As we passed Diamond Head I throttled back to fast glide and swung toward the entrance to Pearl Harbor to line-up the cinder runway that was the principal feature of John Rogers Airport, the primitive commercial airfield of those days. Approaching low over what is now Hickam Air Force Base, we touched down lightly in a fast, tail-high landing, airline-pilot style, and rolled to a stop before the passenger barrier where a group of people awaited our arrival.

The first person to greet us was Bishop Alencastre who had returned earlier in a smaller plane to make sure that all would be in readiness to receive my precious cargo. I chatted with the Bishop while soldiers from Schofield Barracks, assisted by my crew, lowered the heavy case to the plane and carried it to the conveyance that was to take it to the rectory of the Catholic Mission in Honolulu. Then, with words of appreciation from Bishop Alencastre still in my ears, I climbed aboard the bomber. Ten minutes later we were landing at Luke Field. Thus ended one of the most interesting episodes of my 36 years of military flying.

Continued on page 4

The words of their hymn, or lament, were Hawaiian and the air was strange to me. It was singing such as no visitor in Honolulu would ever hear, and under the circumstances was sad, and extremely moving.

Continued from page 4

Since that day I have learned that a solemn court will one day sit in judgment to determine whether Father Damien De Veuster is worthy of a place among the Saints of the Roman-Catholic Church. Indeed, unknown to me at the time, the priests grouped about that opened coffin at Kalawao included the members of the Tribunal of Canonization, of which my passenger Bishop Alencastre, was the head. One of their number

was the "Devil's Advocate," whose presence was required when the coffin was opened. The priest who filled this role was the same who, a few days later delivered the widely published sermon of eulogy and farewell at the special service for Father Damien in Honolulu prior to his departure aboard the transport. He is the Rev. Patrick Logan, SS.CC. who for many years has labored as successor to Damien at the church of St. Francis at Kalaupapa, Molokai. Father Logan probably knows more

about Damien than any other living person, for in his student days at Louvain, he often talked with Damien's brother Paphile, who had been prevented by illness from filling his assignment to Honolulu, with the result that Damien was sent in his stead, to martyrdom and fame. This good Father has been kind enough to take time from his exacting duties to clarify my memory of the event that took place in that distant churchyard over 20 years ago.

I continue to be intrigued by the circumstance of having been the

one who handled the reins of the 1200 fiery horses that powered the aerial chariot which came to Molokai and carried Father Damien up, across the turbulent channel to Honolulu, on the first leg of his long journey home.

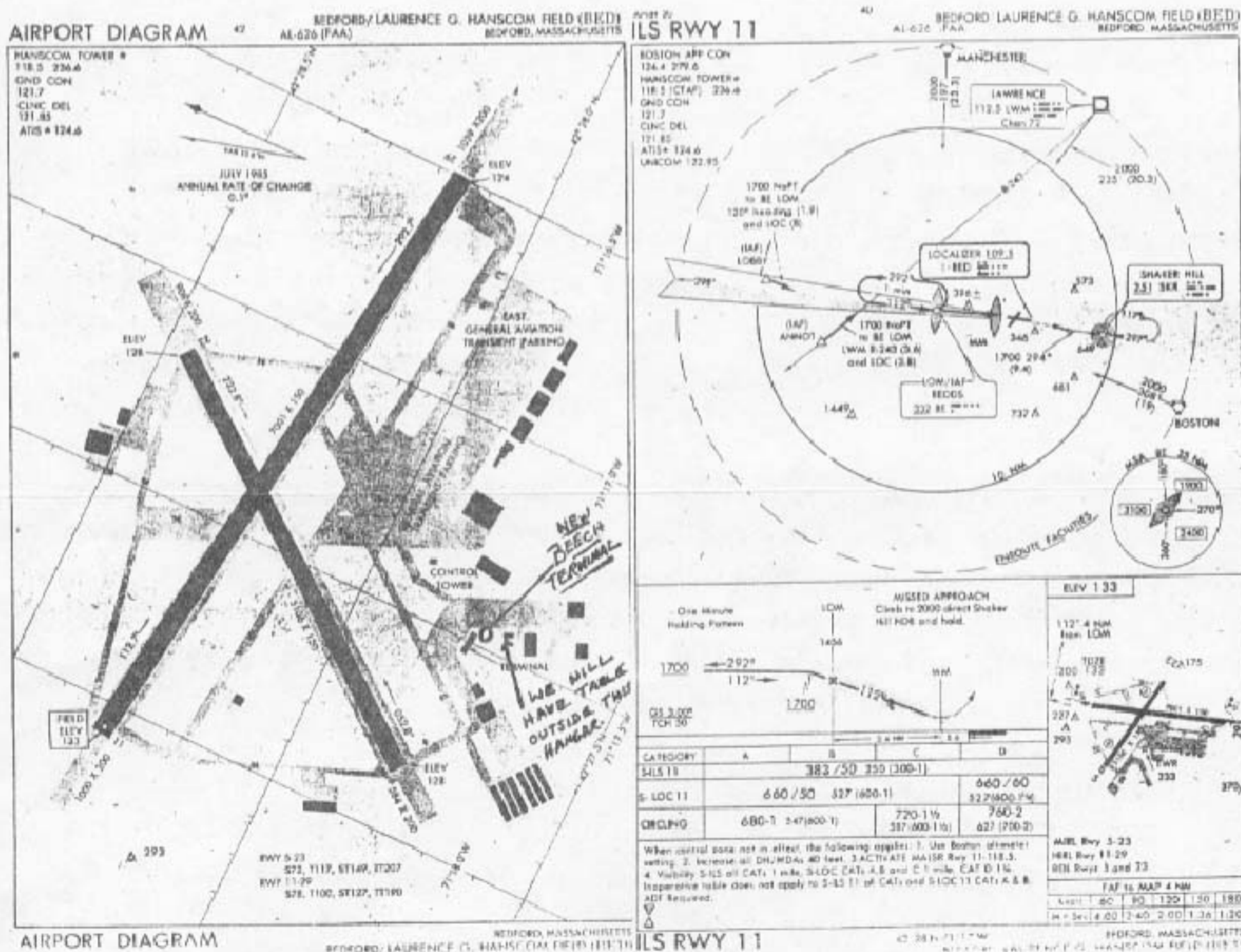
I hope he remembers the smooth flight and gentle landing.

The title "Sweet Chariot" is derived from the spiritual hymn, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, comin' for to carry me home."

As I took my seat,
I discovered that
my misgivings had
evaporated. Instead
I had come the
realization that I
was the recipient
of a unique honor.

NAPP NATIONAL CONVENTION

Boston, MA. July 11 - 12, 1989



NAPP NATIONAL CONVENTION

BOSTON, MA

July 11 - 12, 1989

NAME _____

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CITY/STATE _____ ZIP _____

Arrival by:

Private Plane _____ # _____

ETA _____

Date/Time

Commercial Flt _____

Car _____

ETD _____

Date/Time

FBO: Beech Terminal

Hanscom Field

Bedford, MA

Lodging at:

DAYS INN

440 BEDFORD STREET

Lexington, MA 02173

617-861-8850

Reservations to:

REV. JACK LAWLER

St. Mary's Rectory

796 Boston Road

Pinehurst, MA 01866

508-663-2215

Make reservations with cards. We are short a few so I tried to guess who might be coming and sharing a room. CALL if you need a reservation.

Co-host, Jack Lawler, would appreciate you indicating your preferences for "things to do" while in Boston for the Convention. To take in all the suggestions he has received to date would take a week. Perhaps some plan on staying that long and you'll be able to do the whole circuit. Jack says it would be possible to divide the group and some could go one way while others take in something else. So you see your EARLY response is important.

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