

*An extraordinary collection of wartime portraits saved from the flames*

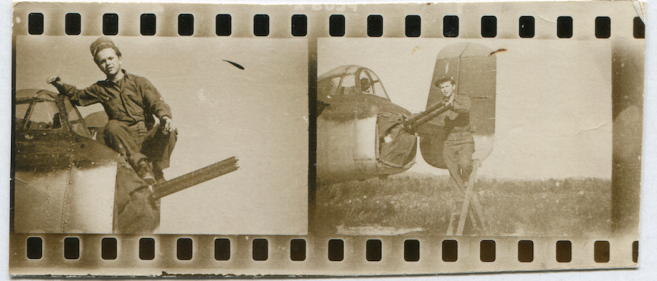
# Bomber Boys:



# Exhibit Overview

In 1996, a secret cache of World War II images, ephemera, and a diary was found after the sudden death of the man who had saved them. Mouse-chewed and musty, the cache was saved from the burn pile by his two daughters unfamiliar with any of their father's wartime past. He'd never talked of the war and never seemed to want to. But in this stash was the story of a young life lived and saved by fate after 59 missions as a tail gunner in the back-end of a B-25 bomber.

The bomber boy was Keith B. Lile, who'd left Puyallup, Washington, to enter the Air Corps at just 19 years old. He didn't know where he'd be stationed. He didn't know what his job would be, he just knew that he had to serve and he wanted to fly.



*"Do you remember when you were about seven, you were at the house one day, and I let you run the Hoover sweeper, and you were thrilled to death, because it sounded like an air plane? I wonder if that terrible roaring of motors will always thrill you."*

—Flora Peckham Rasmussen in a letter to Keith Lile, 1944

*50<sup>th</sup> Mission, April 1945*



Captain Dan Bowling, just 23 years old.



Numerous diary entries describe going down to "the shack to do some printing." Lile and a buddy "Berman" had a darkroom on base where they printed photographs, sometimes by the dozens.

## Exhibit Specifics

This 1,500-2,000 square-foot exhibit will include 12-24 canvas-wrapped photographic reproductions as well as excerpts from letters, the diary, news accounts, and personal interviews to reveal the real-time story of the men celebrated in the literary classic *Catch 22*. Boys from the 12<sup>th</sup> Army Air Corps, 321<sup>st</sup> bomb group, stationed on Corsica and later in northern Italy were the key players in the strategic bombing effort that crippled the rail line between Italy and Austria/Germany. The goal: Choke out the Axis Army by shutting down the movement of supplies.

*Wrapped in this shroud of world war history emerges a poignant series of images—some portraits, some everyday shots, that reveal the people in the planes.*

These images are made available through a private family collection and will be transformed into a moving and evocative exhibit by accomplished museum educator, writer, and content developer Stephanie Lile.



*Down at the shack*

# Exhibit Sections

BOMBER BOYS is organized in four sections:

The Cache

The Combat

The Captains

The Crew

The exhibit includes an invitation to the community to add pictures and information about their own bomber boys as well as help identify the many unidentified airmen pictured in the cache. Museums may also opt to add a section on their own community's contribution to strategic bombing.

## Community Engagement

As the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary rolls into the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, this exhibit is compelling for its connection to Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and general family and military history.

Bringing the subject of war to the table, the exhibit challenges visitors with thought-provoking questions such as "What does peace look like to you?" and "What would you do to protect your freedom?"



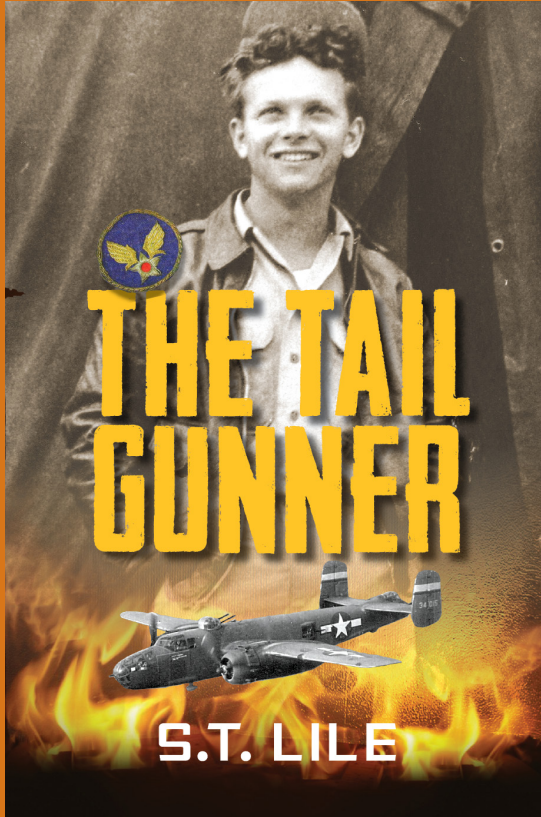
B-25 Bomber Crew, 1945. Top left to right>Doe, Knauss, Epstein; Bottom : Carney, Lile, Stout



Captain Paul Hannah, c. 1945



B-25 bombers soar over Italy



Engage both teens and the over-50 crowd in an exhibit-related read-along using the young adult novel based on the discovery of the cache.

## Exhibit Bookings and Questions:

KBL Family Collection  
Represented by Bering Street Studio  
253-677-4870  
[BeringStreetInfo@gmail.com](mailto:BeringStreetInfo@gmail.com)  
PO Box 2121  
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

## The Exhibit Package

BOMBER BOYS is a complete exhibit package that includes all exhibit elements, including public programming suggestions, ancillary publications, and K-12 school materials for at-school and in-gallery use.

- 12-24 Portraits (depending on space)
- Portrait labels
- Text panels
- Photo Shack visitor portrait set
- Installation guide and on-site assistance
- K-12 Curriculum Materials for both pre-visit and in-gallery study
- Program suggestions
- Volunteer and staff training/walk-through by the curator
- Sample copies of the BOMBER BOYS exhibit catalog and THE TAIL GUNNER.
- **Rental Fee:** \$10,000 for 3-months. Venues in Washington State may be eligible for free shipping and installation at your venue.
- \* Shipping from your venue back to us is not charged when another venue immediately follows yours. Additional fees for installation may be charged depending on your needs.

# Who We Are

THE KBL FAMILY COLLECTION is a private family collective dedicated to using the images and ephemera left to us for history education and research, particularly during the five years leading to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. We hope that the materials our father left behind, as well as the exhibits we produce, will not only help people better understand the past, but will promote peace in the future.

BOMBER BOYS is the first exhibit offered by the KBL Family Collection, and it is offered exclusively through BERING STREET STUDIO. It has been developed by project lead Stephanie Lile, a highly accomplished museum professional with more than two decades of exhibit development and museum education experience.

Our goal is to serve small and medium-sized museums with this exhibit—museums that sometimes don't have access to top-quality exhibits produced especially for smaller spaces.

Please contact Bering Street Studio to discuss other exhibit development and collaborative projects featuring this collection or any other.

## CONTACT US THROUGH:

Stephanie Lile  
Bering Street Studio  
253-677-4870

[BeringStreetInfo@gmail.com](mailto:BeringStreetInfo@gmail.com)

## Project Funding

Bering Street Studio is a creative enterprise that makes complete, high quality exhibits available at the lowest fees possible. Rental fees cover the costs of production and curation. When possible, we secure additional grant and corporate funding so that we can increase accessibility and bring meaningful collections and experiences to people across the nation.

We particularly thank THE AWESOME FOUNDATION for helping make "Bomber Boys" possible.