



## WWII Plane Flying High Again



(SUNPhoto by Robert Trapp)

**Media types take turns** posing in front of the B-17 Aluminum Overcast at the Double Eagle Airport in Albuquerque. The four-engine WWII bomber nick-named the Flying Fortress was the backbone of German bombing missions. The artwork on bombers during that era came from pilots naming their planes and usually someone in the squadron creating the art. The bombs painted above the name art signifies successful missions.

**By Robert Trapp**  
SUN Publisher

It was highly ironic and a little disconcerting to have flight engineer Konrad Werner assist in getting nine media visitors into a 1945 B-17 bomber. Not only is his name almost stereotypically German, he had the thick accent and attitude to go with it.

The 20-minute flight from Albuquerque's Double Eagle II airport, out on the west mesa, was a public relations promotion to get media types to write and talk and shoot video of the event.

While our winged museum, Aluminum Overcast, never saw action over Germany, the B-17 was the backbone of the bombing mission over Europe during WWII from 1941 to 1945. The United States built more than 12,000 B-17s of different models and styles from 1939 to 1945. More than half were shot down over France and Germany. Overcast left the manufacturing line May 18, 1945, the late date being the reason it never saw action. This is probably why it was found in such good condition and relatively more easily restored.

This Overcast is named after another B-17, with the original moniker, which was shot down in 1944, over France. It got its name from a fighter pilot remarking that flying under a squadron of B-17s during a

mission gave him the sense of flying under an aluminum overcast.

Pilot Ken Morris said the biggest expense keeping the Overcast operating is fuel, followed by training and housing and moving the volunteer ground crew. The Overcast burns about 200 gallons per hour, while it cruises at 170 miles per hour.

### Taking off

The safety briefing on the ground was sparse. This wasn't your Delta Airlines flight attendant telling you to put your cell phone away, keep your seatbelt on or put your tray table up. Actually the flight engineer giving the safety briefing told us as soon as we were off the ground, that we could undo our 1940s-style seatbelt and go wherever we wanted.

"You can move around and just grab whatever structure that looks like it's sturdy," he said. "But there's two rows of cables running down the top of the ceiling and they look like they'd be perfect for handholds. They're not. The pilot uses them to steer the plane, so don't grab those."

Good tip. We signed our obligatory waivers and loaded up. This was a simple procedure of walking from the terminal, maybe 50 yards to the rear of the plane and going up two

steps. Then we were each directed to a high tech, cushy seat much like K-Mart backyard furniture. These were not built for comfort, just bombing. And they did a spectacular job of that for almost five years over Europe.

Once we figured out our seatbelts, the plane's four engines (one Studebaker 1820 and three Curtiss-Wright 1820-97s) had wound up to an amazingly loud level. We taxied a short distance and the Overcast used minimal effort and runway to get airborne. The weather report said surface winds were from the southwest at 25, gusting to 37. But once we were in the air, the ride was relatively smooth.

We'd barely cleared 500 feet and were given the thumbs up (literally) to move wherever we wanted. There's no radio system, public address or lighted signs. The whole flight was hand signals.

### Big guns

The plane has 13 giant machine guns on it, earning the nickname flying fortress. Two of the .50 caliber machine guns were riding with us in mid-cabin. One pointed out each side. Additionally, there was one in the tail section and several more forward (above and below the cockpit) and one in

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## Tomas Says 'No Mas' to Questions



(SUNphoto by Barron Jones)

**Cariños Board member Leo Marquez (right) attempts to separate fellow Board members Del Jimenez (left) and Tomas Garcia, following a brief scuffle.**

**By Barron Jones**  
SUN Staff Writer

Two Cariños Charter School Board members got into a physical fight after one of the men

questioned how the other was treating a representative of a statewide immigrant advocacy group.

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## Man Stabbed in Alleged Road Rage Incident

**By Wheeler Cowperthwaite**  
SUN Staff Writer

Española Police detectives are investigating the curious case of a man stabbed in the side, Dec. 26, at the intersection of Santa Clara Bridge Road and Riverside Drive, described by the victim as an act of road rage.

Rudy Vialpando, 34, of Española, walked into the emergency room at the Española Hospital around 1:24 p.m. with a stab wound, at which point hospital staff called 911 to alert police.

Officer Lee Lopez was dispatched to the hospital, where Vialpando was getting a CT scan.

When Vialpando was out of the scan, he told Lopez that he turned right from Lower San Pedro Road, onto Santa Clara Bridge road, when a gray or silver Nissan Maxima pulled next to him and they both stopped at the light at Santa Clara Bridge Road and South Riverside Drive.

"He said a guy jumped out, and he got out, and they started to physically fight," Deputy Chief Matthew Vigil said. "He felt that he may have been stabbed."

Vialpando told Lopez he got back into his car while his attacker started banging on his car window with the handle of the knife.

He then drove himself to the Española Hospital, but was later transported to the University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque because the knife hit his kidney.

"It was a stab wound to the left side," Vigil said.

He said neither Vialpando nor his girlfriend were able to ascertain how long the knife was, but the case has been referred to the Criminal Investigation Division for further investigation.

When Lopez talked to Vial-

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## Legislator Pre-Files Bills

**By Wheeler Cowperthwaite, Austin Fisher and Barron Jones**  
SUN Staff Writers

With the 2017 legislative session slated to start Jan. 17, one senator representing Rio Arriba County already has three pieces of legislation pre-filed, while one representative said he plans to file bills that failed during the short 2016 session.

The legislature meets every year. Odd years are 60-day sessions, even years are 30-day sessions.

Sen. Richard Martinez, D-Rio Arriba, Los Alamos, Sandoval and Santa Fe counties proposed one bill to require background checks for the private sale of firearms and another to prevent those overdosing from being arrested if someone calls 911.

Martinez said he was approached by Julianna Koob, lobbying on behalf of Every Town for Gun Safety, a national gun safety interest group, with the idea for the bill.

It is being co-sponsored by Sen. Peter Wirth, D-Santa Fe, and was pre-filed in the house by Rep. Stephanie Garcia-Richard, D-Los Alamos,

Rio Arriba, Sandoval and Santa Fe counties.

"We're just trying to close the loophole, especially on private gun sales," Martinez said. "This would make it so everybody's required to get a background check."

Martinez said this is the first time he has introduced such a bill in the legislature.

When it comes to push back, the only response Martinez has gotten so far, has been from newspaper reporters calling him and saying that the National Rifle Association is opposed to his bill.

"I said (to them), 'You're never going to keep the NRA happy,'" Martinez said. "That's not the intent. The intent is to save lives. As far as the NRA is concerned, they sell guns, and they want to make money, and they don't care whose hands



Martinez

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## County's Tech Problems Could Mean OMA Violation

**By Austin Fisher**  
SUN Staff Writer

More than two months after equipment that supports the official Rio Arriba County website failed, County officials are still not reaching state requirements for giving the public notice of their meetings.

The County's main website, found at rio-arriba.org, does not have a working page for agendas. Agendas for the County's public meetings have not been posted to the website since November, in violation of the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.

The County's website that allows Internet users to search for

inmates in the County Detention Center, found at rio-arriba.org/archonixxjailpublic, is also down.

Raymond Ortiz, the County's Information Technology manager, said in a Jan. 6 interview, that the server, the main piece of equipment that hosted the website's data, has failed, and a new server has been installed.

The database that holds the information for the website is running again, but parts of the website will remain inoperable until the County's various department heads can contribute the data needed because all of the data on the original server was lost.

"The hardware is completely irrecoverable," Ortiz said.

He is a contractor hired by the County to oversee the network infrastructure and website. His company, Ortiz System Integration, is based in Española.

Ortiz said part of the reason for the delay is the complexity of cobbling together content like documents, photos and text from the County's various departments, who have staff with varying levels of expertise.

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