American Airpower Heritage Museum's American Combat Airman Hall of Fame
Midland, Texas

The American Combat Airman Hall of Fame was one of several major exhibits installed for the American Airpower Heritage Museum. I interviewed, researched and wrote exhibit panels for more than a dozen World War II aces. Subjects included General Tibbets, who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and Colonel Morgan (shown below), who flew the famous B-17 Memphis Bell and on whom the movie, "On a Wing and a Prayer," is based. The client's goal for the style and tone of the text as well as the look of the layout was a "clean, informative magazine page."

Colonel Robert K. Morgan, USAF

Robert Morgan is best known for piloting the famous Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress the Memphis Belle, which was the first heavy bomber to complete 25 missions over Europe and be sent home. However, his wartime contributions included much more than that. After his tour of duty in Europe, Morgan went on to complete another 25 missions as Commander of a Boeing B-29 Superfortress squadron in the Pacific. During his long and successful service, Morgan was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross three times and the Air Medal ten times.

Robert Morgan grew up in Asheville, North Carolina. In 1941, Morgan joined the Army Air Corps after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania. In October of 1942, he flew the Memphis Belle to Bassingbourn, England, to join the 8th Air Force in the 324th Bombardment Squadron, 91st Bombardment Group.

Daylight Bombing Raids
The U.S. Army Air Forces conducted successful daytime bombing raids on strategic targets in German-occupied Europe, but the price was high. As losses reached 82%, the War Department set the maximum number of bombing missions at 25 per crewmember. Of 48 bombers that were in the squadron when the Memphis Belle arrived, only four were still flying seven months later.

Although the Memphis Belle was scarred by anti-aircraft and machine gun fire, lost nine engines, a large section of the right wing, and part of the tail section during its 25 missions, Morgan never lost a crew member. The ten men of the Memphis Belle flew more than 148 combat hours and covered 20,000 miles. They dropped more than 60 tons of bombs over France, Germany, and Belgium, shot down eight enemy fighters, destroyed five others and damaged a dozen more.