

MEDIA ADVISORY

For Release: May 5, 2008

**LOCAL VETERANS CELEBRATE ARMED FORCES DAY, SATURDAY MAY 17
AT SPECIAL EVENT**

What: Local veterans will be recognized at a special celebration on Armed Forces Day by the Cleveland Wing of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF). Local WWII vet Robert T. Smith will be honored as “Veteran of the Year.”

Where: Cleveland Wing CAF hangar, Lorain County Regional Airport, 44050 Russia Road, Elyria, Ohio

When: Saturday, May 17. 10:00 AM- 5:00 PM. Mr. Smith is scheduled to be honored between 11:00-11:30 AM. (A more detailed time schedule will follow.)

The Backstory: What makes the celebration special is Mr. Smith’s amazing story. Assigned as bombardier, Mr. Smith was a member of the 388th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force in Knettishall, England. In addition to his combat missions over German-occupied territory, Mr. Smith participated in a little-known campaign near the end of the war dubbed, “Operation Chowhound.” American planes dropped food to starving civilians who were surrounded by German troops in the Netherlands. Some 60 years later, Mr. Smith was having breakfast with a group of fellow residents of his Sheffield Village retirement community. When the talk turned to the war, a fellow resident, Jan Van Galen, recounted the time his family was saved by American and British bombers dropping food. When Mr. Smith told Mr. Van Galen that he had flown on one of those missions, Mr. Van Galen replied, “Let me shake your hand. You saved my life.”

Notes:

*Event is free and open to the public.

*There will be a drawing for two rides in the CAF’s World War II SNJ4 Texan airplane

*If photographers/videographers would like a ride in the plane please contact Cleveland Wing members:

Kevin Donovan / Fauver, Keyse-Walker & Donovan / 440-934-3700

Robert Koren / 440-933-8086 / mobile: 440-864-2710

For more info and to see a photo of the plane, visit www.clevelandwing.org