

Jake Schuffert Inks Last Toon

by Chuck
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It would be difficult to find an AFPAAA member who has not heard of Jake Schuffert. You may not have known him personally – he wasn't one to create a stir in a crowd – but we all are familiar with the cartoons Jake's artistic talent produced for Blue-suiters for a more than half-a-century.

A mention of Airlift Laffs, It All Counts for 30, or Here's Jake quickly turns a "Jake who?" toan "Oh, that Jake!"



A few days after his death from bone cancer, November 2, at his home in Alexandria, Va., his wife, Dottie, was clearing his desk and found an unpublished cartoon.

Thanksgiving Day was three weeks away. On the surface the art was about the holiday, but those closest to him think Jake may have foreseen his passing and put his own humorous spin to it. Two turkeys in the drawing are heard to say "...mashed potatoes, gravy, yams, stuffing, cranberry sauce, pudding, pumpkin pie --- man, if you gotta go, that's the way to go!!!"

Jake was born John Henning Schuffert in New Castle, Pa., in 1919.

His artistic ability was noted at age 10 when he touched up favorite comic strip characters. Correspondence courses in cartooning followed.

One step ahead of the draft, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1940. Trained as an radio operator-gunner, Jake flew 50 missions with 15th Air Force in Africa and Italy. When his B-24 was disabled during a 1944 raid on the Rumanian oil fields near Ploesti, he and his crewmates bailed out.

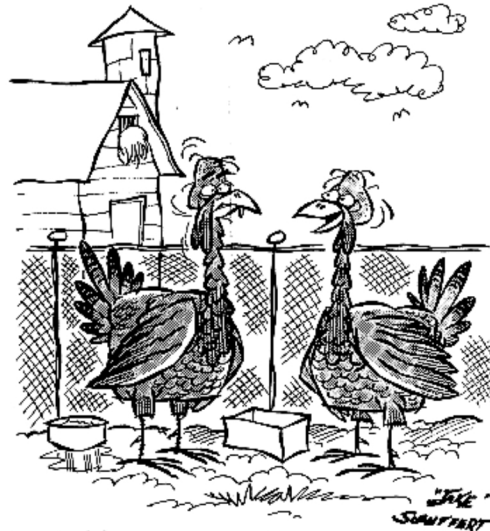
They spent several months in Yugoslavia before finding their way back to Italy.

Jake's signature art adorned many aircraft and base newspapers during the war years, but it was not until the Berlin Airlift that he received Air Force-wide recognition.

Officially the radio operator for Lt. Geneneral William Tunner, airlift commander, Jake's cartoons in *Task Force Times* were compared to Bill Mauldin's Willie and Joe from World

War II. Fifteen months later, Tunner – and Jake – went to the Pacific. There *Stars and Stripes* and *Air Force Times* became new outlets and Jake's fan club mushroomed.

After 13 years on flying status, Jake moved into the graphics career field and brightened the pages of SAC's *Combat Crew* magazine before retiring in 1963 as a Master.



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He spent three years as an illustrator for the Army Signal Corps until joining SAFOI's Command Services Unit at Bolling AFB.

It All Counts for 30 debuted in Airman magazine in 1971, followed by Here's Jake. When CSU was moved to Kelly AFB in 1978, Jake declined to move and went to the Pentagon and Air Force Graphics. He finished his 23-year civil service career in 1986.

His unbroken string of appearances in *Airman* continues to lead all readership polls. Jerry Stringer, Airman editor, said "The cartoons have withstood the test of time and will continue to brighten the lives of Air Force people worldwide."

Jake published four books of his cartoons that sold briskly in base exchanges. One of his last public appearances was as guest of honor at the Berlin Airlift Veterans Association. He told some 200 members that he was awarding legal rights to his book, "Airlift Laffs," to the organization.

For many AFPAAA members, a valued memento of a SAFOI tour was one of Jake's 17x21-inch color caricatures, usually presented at the completion of a Pentagon tour. They have always been prized keepsakes.

Like fine wines and old masters, the intrinsic value of those caricatures skyrocketed on November 2, 1998, but they will never equal the priceless value of the morale boost Jake Schuffert gave to the Air Force.