



# AFA HOUSTON Proudly Salutes KEMP MARTIN

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force, (Ret.)



Kemp as a B-17 Navigator—1943

## Then and Now

Rarely does one find an individual with such history and adventure packed into his lifetime. A combat history that spans two wars. Over 31 missions in a B-17, a bailout over German held territory after that B-17 was shot down, capture and imprisonment as a POW, escape, evasion and rescue, return only to become involved in another war in Korea, then Indochina, then SAC, and finally return to civilian life to become a successful author and businessman. These are the experiences of our own Kemp and Mary Martin in a life time of challenges, thrills, romance and adventure that are embodied in Kemp's books and continue to this day.



2007—Author and Businessman

## Going to War

### Kemp and Mary Martin Circa 1942

Both from Indianapolis, life really began for them in Hondo, Texas where Kemp became a Navigator and was assigned first to the Replacement Depot in Salt Lake City and then to the 20th Bomb Squadron in Great Falls, Montana and B-17's. Mary was 19 and Kemp was 23. After 10 months of marriage, they gathered their worldly possessions into a utility trailer pulled by a 1940 DeSoto and made the trip into cold weather. From there they pulled the trailer to Kearney, Nebraska and then on to Morrison Field in West Palm Beach, Florida. The real adventure was just ahead as Kemp prepared for overseas combat in Africa and Italy and Mary went back to Indianapolis to build Norden bomb sights for the B-17's Kemp flew in.



20th Bomb Squadron  
Insignia



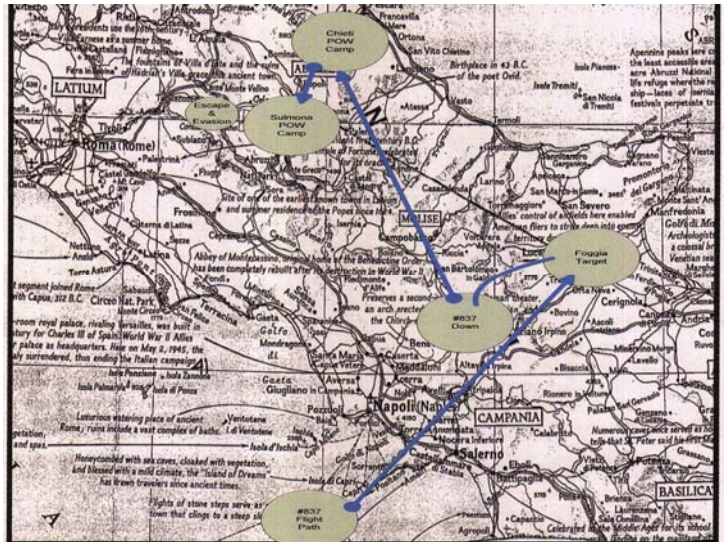
1943—Crew of B-17 #425837 "C BATT" Named After Battery C at Pearl Harbor. Kemp is standing far right.

## LtCol. Martin in his 20th Bomb Sq Bomber Jacket

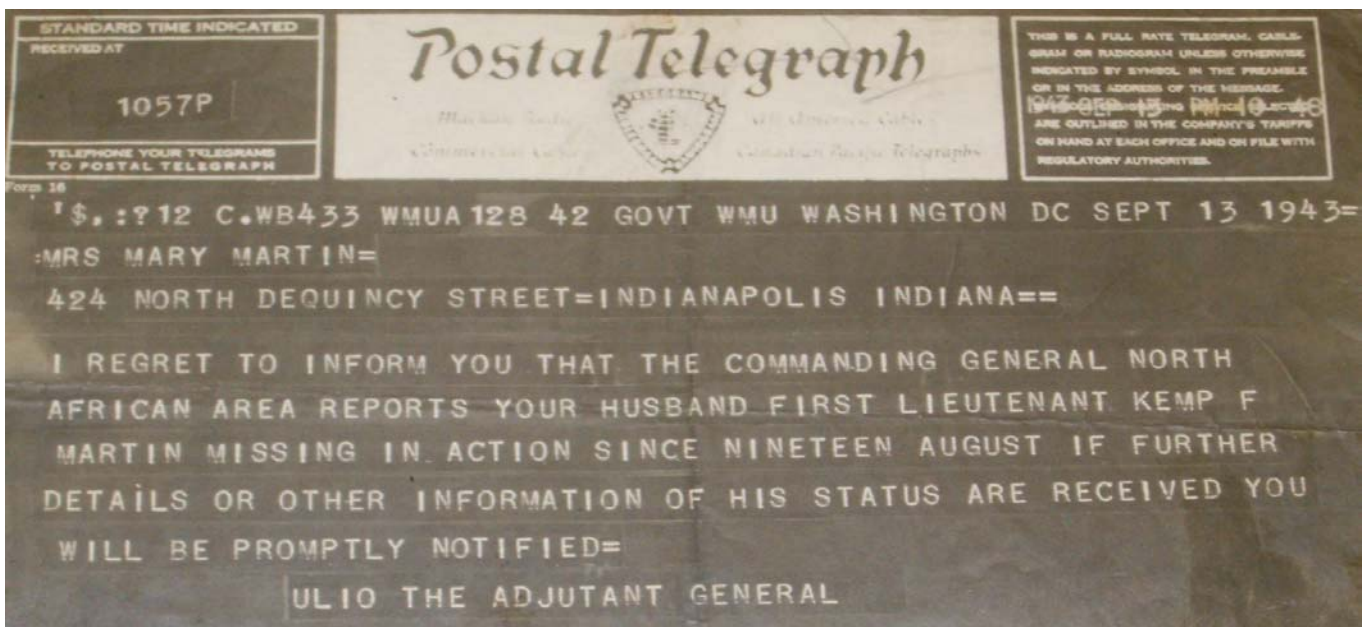
Flying into war wasn't easy back then. The route from Morrison Field took them to Trinidad, across the Equator to Natal, Brazil, thence to the Ascension Island in the middle of the Atlantic, then on to Liberia, Dakar, Morocco and finally to Algeria where the war became a serious matter. Kemp's first mission was a church in Palermo that was being used as a German ammunition dump. The size of the explosion proved intelligence right. From then on thru 31 missions over German held Italy, Kemp experienced the hazards and horrors of German 88's and ME109 attacks on each mission. On the 32nd mission to Foggia, Italy, A/cft #837 and Kemp's number came up. Losing one engine and one supercharger to anti-aircraft fire over target, 837 feathered and began falling behind the formation only to be pounced on by ME109's. Kemp and his pilot, Lt. Ben Pasero, made it safely to the ground only to be immediately captured by the Italians. 19 Aug 43 was the date Kemp and Ben became POW's.



**Right:** The route to Foggia over enemy held Italy on 837's 32nd and final mission. 5 Aircraft were lost. Only 10 survived out of 50 crewmembers. Kemp was one of the few. It had turned out to be a "turkey shoot" for the German ME109's and was a record loss at that point in the war. Kemp was captured and taken North from the crash site to Chieti then moved to Sulmona where he and Ben escaped.



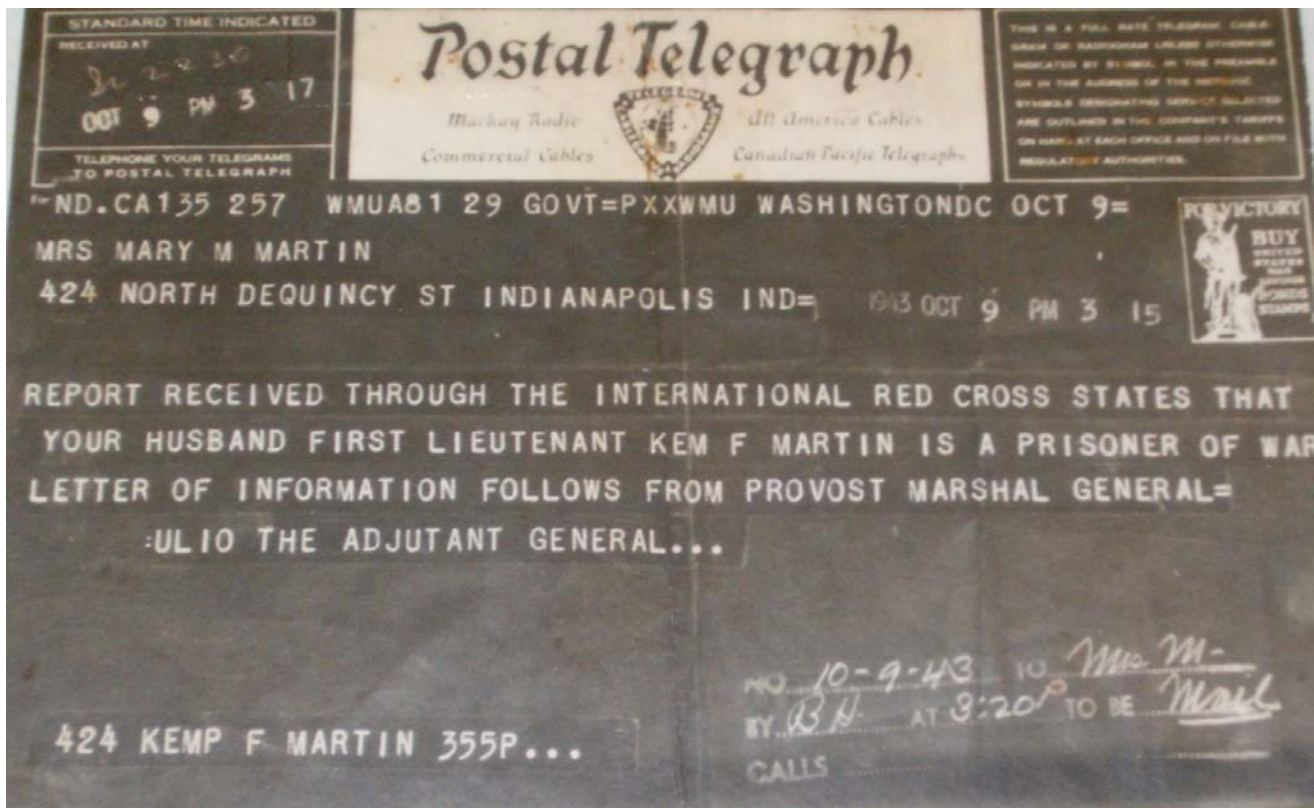
**Below:** The telegram that strikes dread in the hearts of all loved ones. Mary was at work in the bomb-sight factory when it arrived at Kemp's father's home. A very bad day for both families.



## LIFE AS A POW

**Chieti, Italy:** Near the Italian Boot is where Kemp spent most of his time in captivity. The POW camp was run by the Italians. Kemp kept a very detailed journal of his activities throughout his life and the war. Prison camp was no exception although writing tools and paper were often a problem. So detailed in fact that after his return the journal was labeled Top Secret by the War Dept. The journal later became the basis for the great books Kemp has written. Italy's surrender proved to be the

basis for Kemp and Ben Pasero's escape from prison after some 35 days of internment. The Italian Army walked off the walls of the Chieti camp but not before the German Army took over. Kemp and Ben were transferred to another camp at Sulmona, Italy. When notified that they would be sent to POW camps inside Germany, Kemp and Ben made their move. The confusion from the changeover to German control proved to be the distraction that made escape possible.



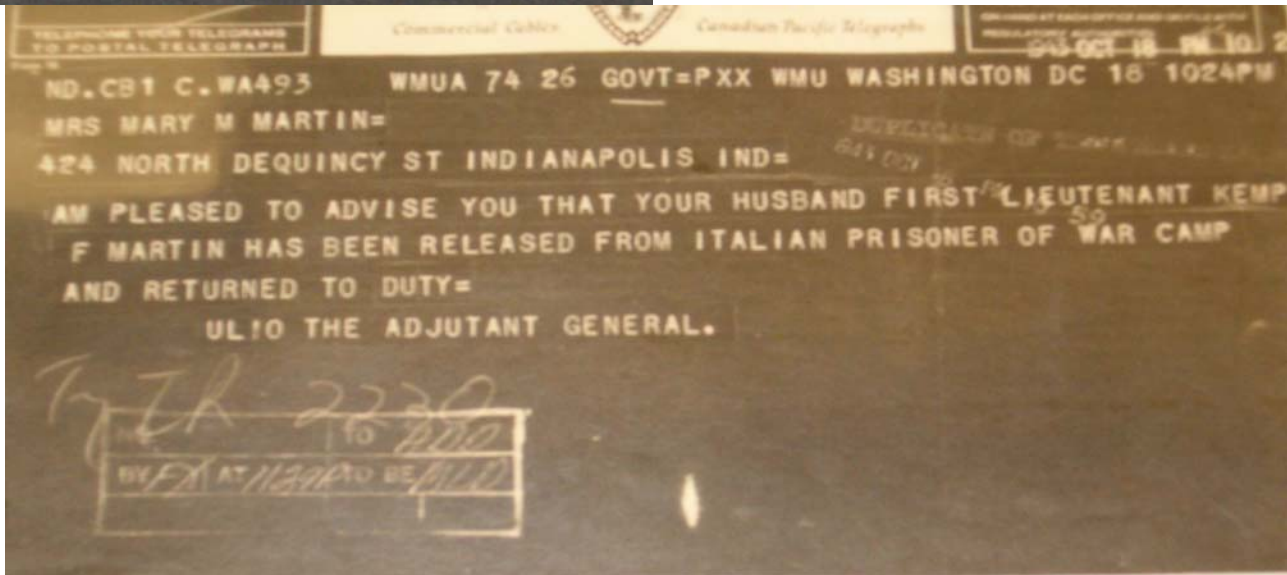
### When Hearts Get Lighter...

And when the world gets brighter. These are perhaps the thoughts going through Mary Martin's mind when she received this news on 9 October 1943. Little did she know that her husband had already escaped the POW camp and was enduring his third great test of being squarely in the middle of the German front lines.

## The Great Escape

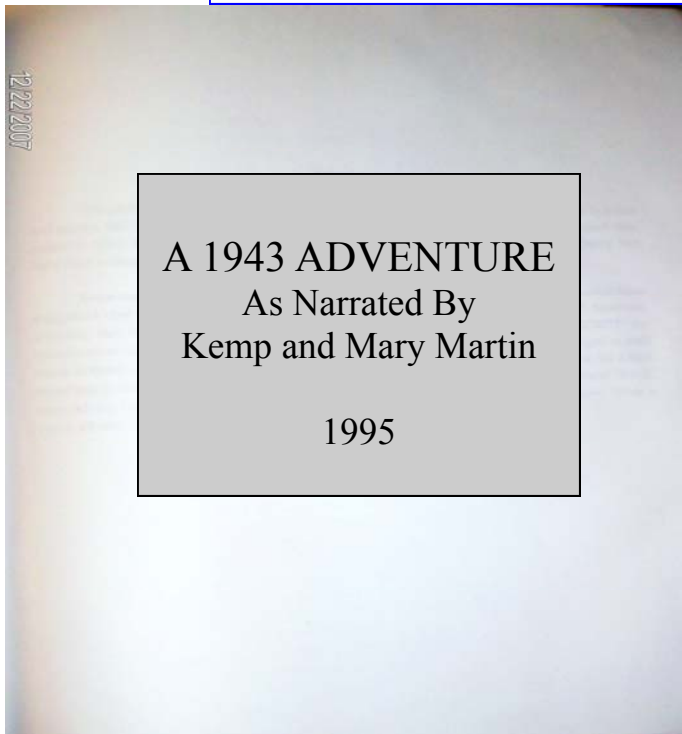


**Kemp Martin (right) and Ben Pasero** after their successful escape back into allied control wearing Italian countryside clothing provided to them by Italian sympathizers along the way. On 23 Sept 1943, after observing the confusion brought about by the change-over to German control, Kemp and Ben slipped under four barbed wire fences to gain the freedom of the Italian countryside. They could not have made it without the help of friendly Italians and some American Italians caught in Italy at the beginning of the war who gave them food and clothing. Progressing to where they thought the allied army was, they found themselves smack dab in the middle of German lines with German artillery in front and back of them. The allied advance and German retreat saved them and they walked into a camp of Canadian soldiers. After 16 days on the run, covering over 75 miles, they came home—and the rest is history.



**Mary and Kemp Martin Reunited**  
**The romance picked up where it left off**  
**The adventure continued**

## Books By Kemp and Mary Martin



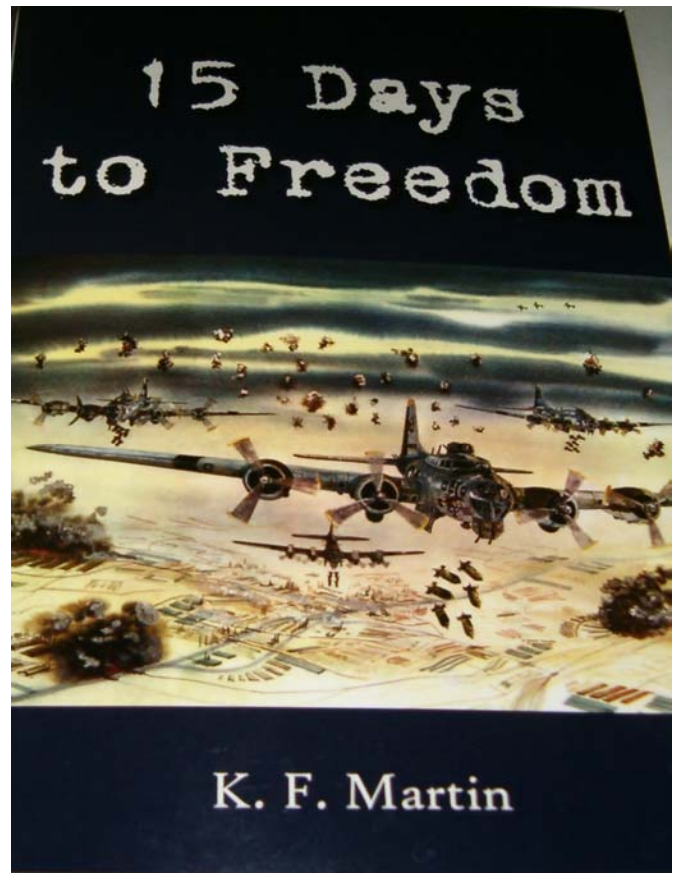
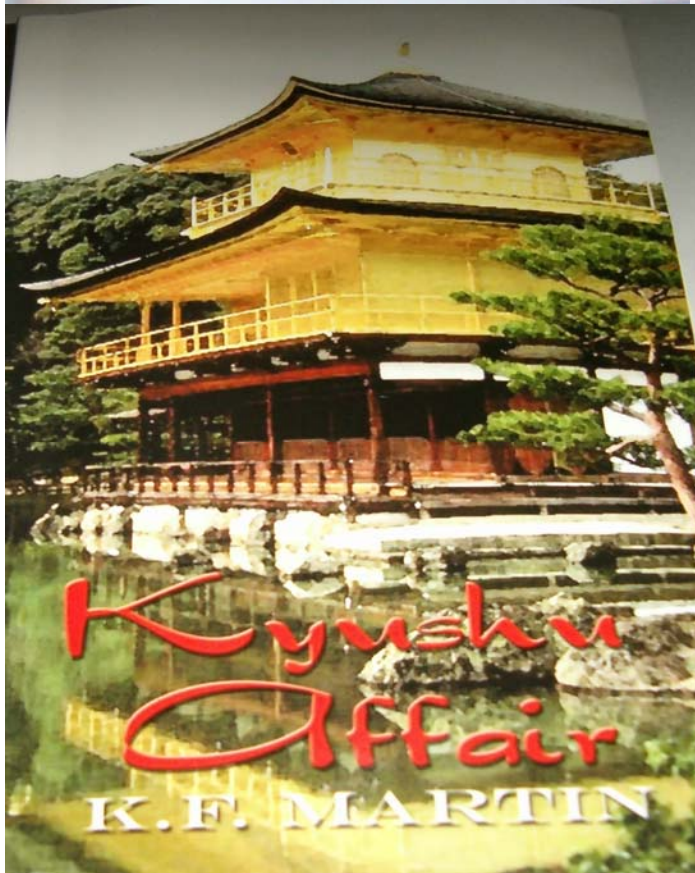
A 1943 ADVENTURE  
As Narrated By  
Kemp and Mary Martin  
1995

**Left:** *A 1943 Adventure* by Kemp and Mary Martin. The factual narrative of Kemp and Mary's WWII adventures.

**Below Left:** *Kyushu Affair*, Fiction based on a true story in Japan during the Korean War.

**Below Right:** *15 Days to Freedom*. The story of the escape from Sulmona with names changed to protect the innocent.

The books are available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com) if you are interested.



## Beyond WWII



**Another War—Korea** Saw Kemp serving once again. Japan and Korea were the settings for his book, *Kyushu Affair*.

**Below:** C-119's in Kemp's unit ready for launch in the Korean War.

From then it was on to Indochina and Dien Bien Phu and finally SAC—but that's another story.



**Life after War  
Businessman  
Dorman-Martin Insurance  
Agency**

The Dorman-Martin Insurance Agency has been serving the insurance needs of Houstonians since it was established in 1916 by Mr. George Woods, General Agent, Indianapolis Life Insurance Company. He began marketing life insurance and retirement programs. In 1944 Mr. Finck Dorman, CLU., joined the agency and expanded the product line to include property and casualty insurance. In 1967 Mr. Kemp F. Martin, CLU, CPCU, CIC, joined the organization and expanded the product line to include individual and group health insurance and in 1992 expanded the line again to include insurance for senior citizens and financial planning. In 2003, after a career of successful sales in other industries, Mr. Kemp F. Martin Jr. joined the agency to continue the tradition of providing Houstonians with insurance and wealth management solutions.

**And... The Romance and Adventure Continues Today**

**AFA—THE FORCE BEHIND THE FORCE**