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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A. O. SMITH BOILER PROVES INSTRUMENTAL IN RESCUE OF HISTORIC WORLD WAR II FIGHTER PLANE BURIED IN 300 FEET OF ICE

ASHLAND CITY, TENN. – The curators of the Lost Squadron Museum in Middlesboro, Ky. turned to technology leader A. O. Smith Water Heaters when they needed a solution to rescue an historic fighter plane from the frozen tundra of Greenland in 1992. The primary tool used in this recovery operation: hot water generated by an A. O. Smith boiler which will soon be on display at the museum.

Historic Flight

In a strategic effort to ferry fighter planes to Europe during World War II, the United States Air Force flew planes from North America to Great Britain with re-fueling posts in the North Atlantic. Unpredictable weather, combined with fuel consumption issues, made these missions especially treacherous.

On July 15, 1942, one squadron, which included a combination of lumbering B-17 long-range bombers and speedy P-38 fighter planes, encountered inclement weather that caused dangerous levels of ice build up on wings and windshields. The squadron could not complete the flight to Great (more)

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Britain. Fuel tanks were running low, and the squadron was forced to crash-land their planes on an ice field in Greenland. All of the pilots were rescued within 11 days and the planes were left behind.

50 Years Later

After several expeditions, the "Lost Squadron" was finally located in 1992 under 268 feet of ice on Greenland. Sponsored by Roy Shoffner of Middlesboro, KY, the mission employed a process called cold mining. An A. O. Smith COF-700 boiler was brought in from the United States as the primary hot water source. It was then hooked up to the "Super Gopher," a melting unit designed specifically for icy recovery missions by Ourway Incorporated, which was used to bore a hole through the solid ice.

Using an eight-foot-long steel rod trailing 300 feet of steel-reinforced tubing, the team located "Glacier Girl," and 268 feet of one-inch steel pipe was run down the resulting hole to act as a guide for the Super Gopher melting unit. Water was supplied by a generator-powered A. O. Smith COF-700 boiler to keep the Super Gopher's nose cone hot as it melted through the ice at approximately four feet per hour. The resulting shaft was approximately four feet in diameter. Once the team reached the plane, they carved a 50-foot-wide cavern using a hot water cannon. The plane was painstakingly removed, part by part, and was reassembled for display at the Lost Squadron Museum.

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Today, thousands of people visit the Lost Squadron Museum. Last year, there were 20,000 visitors who came to Middlesboro to see the P-38 Lighting fly for the first time since being pulled one piece at a time from its icy resting place.

Headquartered in Ashland City, Tenn., A. O. Smith Water Products

Company is a leading manufacturer and marketer of residential and commercial water heaters and hydronic boilers. For more information, visit www.aosmithwaterheaters.com.

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