

Ex-Nebraskan describes airshow horror

HASTINGS — A former Nebraskan who witnessed the air show disaster in West Germany says a surge of adrenaline and a clear path away from the burning wreckage saved his life.

"I don't really remember getting out of there. I just did it," said Ted Alber, a former Blue Springs resident who was at Ramstein Air Base when jets in an Italian flying team collided with each other Sunday.

Alber, 23, a graduate of Blue Hill High School and a former Hastings College student, is an air defense artillery specialist in the U.S. Army. He is stationed near Mainz, West Germany, about 60 miles north of Ramstein Air Base.

Alber told The Hastings Tribune in

a telephone interview that he and several friends were near the airstrip demonstrating remote-controlled miniature aerial training targets when the accident happened.

He said he thought one of the stunt pilots was flying lower than he should have been.

"That's when there was a big thud as one plane broadsided another one," he said. "When he came out of that little ball of fire up there he was heading right for us."

The plane landed about 50 yards from where Alber was standing, and he quickly dashed out of the way.

"I think it was more adrenaline than quick reflexes. It was my body

telling me to get out of there," he said. "When the plane hit it threw fuel in every direction," he said. "There were spots on the ground (where the fuel had soaked in) that were burning before the fire department got there."

Alber said he and his friends were able to get out of the plane's path because they were apart from the crowd of spectators.

"I feel very lucky. When it hit we had a chance to get out of the way," Alber said. "They were packed in so tight (in the crowd) they had no chance to move. All they could do is stand there and watch it come at them. They were so tight nobody could run away."

Leading economic indicator plummets

WASHINGTON — The government said Tuesday its chief forecasting gauge of future economic activity suffered the steepest drop in eight months in July, but few analysts expect a substantial slackening in growth anytime soon.

The 0.8 percent decline in the Commerce Department's Index of Leading Economic Indicators was the biggest since last November, when the index dropped 1.0 percent in the aftermath of the October stock market crash.

However, economists noted that the index posted an exceptionally strong increase in June and cautioned against reading too much into a one-month downturn.

In a separate report, the Commerce Department said orders to U.S. facto-

ries for manufactured goods plunged 3.5 percent in July, the worst decline in 18 months. But that drop followed a very strong showing in June and was heavily influenced by a wide swing in orders for military equipment.

The economy, as measured by the gross national product, grew at a 3.3 percent annual rate in the three months ended in June and at a 3.4 percent pace in the first quarter.

White House spokesman B. Jay Cooper, in California with the vacationing President Reagan, said "The data suggests continued economic growth in the months ahead, although at a more moderate pace than in the first half" of the year.

However, the very strength that dispelled financial markets' worries about a recession is fueling concern that the economy is expanding at a

too-rapid pace that will lead to faster inflation.

In an effort to ease inflationary pressures, the Federal Reserve Board has been attempting to dampen economic growth by pushing up short-term interest rates since late March. On Aug. 9, it took its most dramatic inflation-fighting move by raising the discount rate, its key bank lending rate, by a half percentage point.

Lawrence Chimerine, chairman of the Wefa Group, a Bala Cynwyd, Pa., economic forecasting firm, said Tuesday's reports should help encourage the Fed to hold off on any further tightening moves unless new evidence of inflation surfaces.

However, bond and stock traders had been anticipating the declines and the markets showed little reaction in trading Tuesday.

Smokeless cigarette to be tested

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — A cigarette that produces flavor by heating a capsule instead of burning tobacco will be test marketed in October, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. said Tuesday, but health advocates said smoke is smoke and the new brand won't be cleaner.

"Just because they remove a vast amount of the visible smoke does not eliminate all of the noxious chemicals," said Athena Mueller, general counsel for Action on Smoking and Health in Washington, D.C. "The visible particles are reduced, but it doesn't make it safe for non-smokers."

Reynolds, however, said the low-tar, low-nicotine Premier could become its best-selling brand.

"We believe it has the potential to capture a significant share of the market," said Richard Kampe, president of the tobacco company's development division. "It's a technological breakthrough that addresses all of the criticism that's been generated against cigarettes."

Kampe said the product will be aimed at smokers over age 25.

"This is an example of American ingenuity at its best," he said. "It's important for all of us to understand that a (health and safety) controversy does exist. Here is a cigarette that offers good taste and pleasure by heating rather than burning."

A carbon heat source is lit at the tip of the cigarette, and it heats air that is then drawn past the flavor capsule containing tobacco extracts.

Reynolds Tobacco, one of the nation's largest cigarette manufacturers and a subsidiary of Atlanta-based R.J.R. Nabisco Inc., began selling the new brand this week to distributors, supermarkets and discount chains in three test market cities.

Beginning Oct. 1, Premier will go on sale in St. Louis, and Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz., at a cost about 25 percent — or about 30 cents a pack — more than the company's other brands. Betsy Annesse, director of public relations for the tobacco company, said the cities were chosen because they have "the right mix of retail outlets and a very good distributor network."



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