

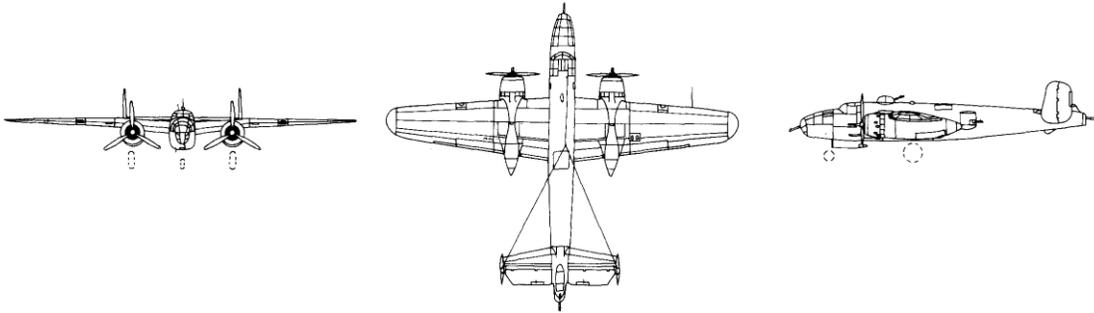
NORTH AMERICAN B-25 MITCHELL

The Medium Bomber That Packed an Extra-Large Punch



Specifications

Wingspan	67 feet, 7 inches	Max Speed	272 mph
Length	52 feet, 11 inches	Service Ceiling	24,200 ft
Height	16 feet, 4 inches	Range	1,350 miles
Empty weight	19,480 pounds	Armament	10 .50 cal. Machine Guns
Max. weight	35,000 pounds	Crew	4-6
Powerplants	Two 1700 hp Wright R-2600-92 Engines		



Background

It is an unmistakable sound you can hear from miles away--the growl of two mighty Wright R-2600 radial engines powering the most revered medium bomber of World War II: the North American B-25 Mitchell. Because of the efforts of the Collings Foundation of Stow, MA, that sound will be heard more often over the cities and towns of America when the B-25 Mitchell, serial number 44-28932 "Tondelayo" visits as part of airshows and events on the Wings of Freedom Tour.

The Collings Foundation B-25 Mitchell was built at the North American Aviation factory in Kansas City, KS as s/n 44-28932 and was accepted by the United States Army Air Corps on August 3, 1944. Instead of heading for combat, 44-28932 served in the United States as part of the AAF Flying Training command for the remainder of the war. Her training duties continued after the war at over twelve different bases in the US until January of 1959 when 44-28932 was dropped from USAF inventory as surplus and purchased by Earl Dodge of Anchorage, Alaska.

Over the next twenty-five years, B-25 44-28932 flew as a civilian-operated forest-fire fighting aircraft in the Pacific Northwest. Though the job she performed was not glamorous, it was far better than the fate of many other B-25s that faced the torch in surplus storage yards for their scrap value in aluminum. Thousands of B-25's met this fate after the end of World War II.

In 1984 the Collings Foundation acquired 44-28932 from Bob Schlaefli of Moses Lake, WA making it the first World War II bomber aircraft to be brought into the collection. Over the following two years the aircraft was restored by Tom Reilly Vintage Aircraft and was initially displayed as the "Hoosier Honey" a composite B-25 representing aircraft 7A with the 12th Air Force in service in North Africa and Italy in 1944.

The "Hoosier Honey" was operated by the Collings Foundation in the Boston area over the next ten years flying to airshows and events staffed by a volunteer crew of enthusiasts and veterans. In 1994 the B-25 was flown to Houston, TX to join the volunteer group and aircraft composing Collings Foundation West based at Ellington Field.

In a move to preserve the aircraft and refresh it from its years of operation, the Collings Foundation took the B-25 to Chino, CA for overhaul by B-25 restoration expert Carl Scholl of Aero Trader, Inc. in late 2001. After work was completed, the B-25 was flown to Midland, TX to be repainted by AVSource West as "Tondelayo", a famous B-25 that flew in the "Air Apaches" or 345th BG, 500th BS of the 5th Air Force in the Pacific Theater against targets in New Guinea.

"Tondelayo" was the name originally given to the B-25 by the crew of Lieutenant Ralph Wallace inspired by Hedy Lamarr's character in the 1942 movie "White Cargo." The story of "Tondelayo" during its mission on October 18th, 1943 is one of the finest examples of tenacity, bravery, and endurance by any bomber crew during World War II. That day, the 500th BS was the fourth squadron of the 345th BG to attack shipping in Vunapope near Rabaul. Captain Lyle Anacker flying B-25 "Snafu" led the flight with Lt. Wallace in "Tondelayo" and Lt. Harlan Peterson in "Sorry Satchul" in the formation. Strafing low-level and claiming three ships in their wake, the attack was a success until avenging fighters waiting for them jumped the flight. Lt. Peterson's aircraft was hit in the left engine and was forced to ditch immediately. "Tondelayo" was hit in the right engine, which was shut down and feathered as it was nearly torn from the wing by the vibration.

Anacker and Wallace closed into tight formation as they headed for home. Over Cape Gazelle an estimated forty to fifty Japanese fighters dove upon the flight of the two B-25s. For over seventy-five minutes the fighters attacked as Captain Anacker and the Lt. Wallace and the crew of "Tondelayo" fought for their lives. During the gunfight, the top turret of "Tondelayo" ran out of ammunition and two of the crew balanced the work of passing gun belts from the nose to the top turret with manning their waist gun positions, handling the radio, and taking turns clamping their hands around a severed gas line to preserve the fuel that would take them home. Anacker's aircraft flying with "Tondelayo" became so badly damaged in this time that he was forced to head for shore and ditch the aircraft. Alone in the battle now, "Tondelayo" pressed on, flying only thirty feet above the water while facing desperate attacks by the Japanese fighters, at least four of which crashed into the water furiously trying to bring "Tondelayo" down. After Sgt. John Murphy had shot down five fighters from the top turret the rest of the fighters turned back. "Tondelayo" limped into the base at Kiriwina for landing. The crew's amazing effort led to the award of the Silver Star. After receiving a new right wing, engine, radio equipment, propeller blade, and scores of patches, "Tondelayo" flew again.

The Collings Foundation's "Tondelayo" flies on in tribute to the crews of the 500th and the many more crews that operated the B-25 in defense of freedom during World War II. To keep her flying, "Tondelayo" is supported by hundreds of volunteer hours, contributions, and sponsors like Champion Aerospace, Houston Aircraft Instruments, Bose Corporation, and Aviation Propeller.

The B-25 flies with the B-17 and B-24 as part of the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom Tour and visits air shows and events nationally. To accomplish this, the Collings Foundation relies solely on contributions and donations to cover the operating cost of over three thousand five hundred dollars per flying hour. These contributions ensure the future of the aircraft and keep it flying as a symbol of American patriotism and as a learning tool for our future generations to learn more about World War II and aviation history.

For More Information:

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