

THE WELCOME PARTY



Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

Spectators check out the historic plane after its landing. "Maid in the Shade" will be on display this week at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Ground tours will be available throughout the week, and paid flights will be available on the weekend.

'Maid in the Shade' lands in Mt. Vernon

The historic WWII B-25J Bomber comes to the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport

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SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — Just before noon Monday at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport, the historic World War II (WWII) Bomber B-25J "Maid in the Shade" came roaring onto the runway in front of a crowd in awe of the aircraft's magnificence.

The fortunate spectators were able to witness the landing of a historic aircraft that was used

overseas in WWII.

Spike McLane, pilot of "Maid in the Shade," described the aircraft as "very loud, exhilarating, and fast."

"Maid in the Shade" was used in approximately 15 combat missions. The recorded missions were all performed between Nov. 4, 1944, and Dec. 31, 1944.

McLane explained that the plane was originally used to attack railroad bridges, switch yards, and terminals. All of the missions "Made in the Shade" performed occurred in Italy and Yugoslavia.

The guns on the plane are now just replicas, but when it was used

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Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

"MAID IN THE SHADE" — The B-25J Bomber "Maid in the Shade" landed on the runway at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport just before noon Monday. The plane is a veteran aircraft that was used for approximately 15 missions in World War II.

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in WWII, there were 12 .50 caliber machine guns placed in strategic positions on the plane.

During wartime, a crew of six manned the B-25J Bomber. McLane informed that the plane flew relatively low compared to other planes, flying around 8,000 feet.

According to McLane, the B-25J Bomber plane really shined in the South Pacific when the planes were adjusted to allow the pilot control of seven .50 caliber machine guns with a single button.

What made this type of plane famous was a mission led by General "Jimmy" Doolittle, in which he led a flight of 16 B-25J Bombers in a perilous attack on Japan to boost morale after Pearl Harbor.

"Maid in the Shade" did not participate in this particular mission, but it is one of few working planes of its kind that saw combat in WWII. McLane stated that as far as engines and appearance goes, "Maid in the Shade" is "the best B-25 out there."

There is a very interesting history behind the aircraft. It was built in 1943 in Kansas City, Kan. The aircraft made its way through Latin America and Africa,

and was used in combat around Corsica, Italy.

After combat, "Maid in the Shade" continued to be a useful aircraft, as it was used back in the United States as a training aircraft.

The plane was eventually sold to the civilian market and was repurposed to dust for red ants in Texas.

"Maid in the Shade" was sold for scrap in Tucson, Ariz. It was purchased for \$1,800 and was donated to the Commemorative Air Force.

It took 28 years to repair and restore the B-25J Bomber back to its original glory.

McLane explained that the aircraft had sat in the hanger so long that it was called the hanger queen, which eventually led to it being named "Maid in the Shade."

The aircraft has been flying for nearly four years now, and it has more than 5,000 miles flown on it.

McLane believes that the purpose of their "Made in the Shade" tours is to "remind people of WWII, and show people what airplanes they used." He commented that "[it is] very fun, but also very humbling to be able to operate this kind of aircraft."

Almost all of the plane's flight crew are veterans like McLane. The Commemorative Air Force is a volunteer-based organization that uses the money they raise to conduct further renovations and spread the awareness of historic war planes.



Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

HANDS ON HISTORY — Volunteers help wipe down the historical aircraft after its landing. The "Maid in the Shade" tour stop in Mt. Vernon will coincide with the Midwest LSA Expo that is occurring this weekend at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

The "Maid in the Shade" tour will run through the weekend and coincide with the Midwest LSA Expo at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. Ground tours of the historic aircraft will be given throughout the week, and paid flights will be available

this weekend.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport is proud to have "Maid in the Shade" available to the public, and encourages everyone to experience this historic aircraft.

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Sentinel Photo/GREG PETERSON

SMOOTH LANDING — The historic B-25J Bomber pulls on to the runway with amazing grace. The aircraft has a wing span of 67 ft. 6 in., a length of 17 ft. 7 in., has a gross weight of 41,800 lbs., and can reach a top speed of 239 knots (275 mph). The plane can hold a bomb load of 4,000 lbs. and is armed with 12 .50 caliber machine guns.