

Due tribute

Historic B-25 bomber visits Mount Vernon



BY BECKY MALKOVICH
THE SOUTHERN

MOUNT VERNON — A flying tribute to those who served in World War II landed Monday at Mount Vernon Outland Airport.

The B-25 "Maid in the Shade," to be joined Friday by a Red Nose P-51D, will be available for tours and flights through Sunday.

Airbase Arizona of the Commemorative Air Force brought the B-25 Mitchell medium bomber to the airport as part of its mission to reconnect the public with history and show veterans that their sacrifices are not forgotten.

"We do it to pay tribute to World War II veterans for what they gave to the country," Dave Gross, part of the B-25's crew, said. "They perk right up when they see this. It's like they are young again."

The flying museum that took 27 years and about \$2.5 million to return to flight status is also a gift to veterans' descendants, he said.

"It's important to them. These guys, when they got back from the war, they didn't say a lot about it," Gross said.

The B-25 was made famous by the April 18, 1942, Doolittle Raid on Japan. The raid was the first U.S. air attack on Japan during the war.

"Most of these guys hadn't flown an aircraft before. It took a lot of courage and resolve to stay with it," he said. "Most missions were flown at tree-top level. That takes a whole lot of courage."

The planes weren't pressurized and "The B-25 is the fastest way to convert aviation fuel to noise," Gross said with a laugh.

Everett D. Atkinson of rural Jefferson County flew B-17s and B-29s during the war, but well remembers the noise made by the B-25.



BECKY MALKOVICH / THE SOUTHERN

The Airbase Arizona Commemorative Air Force landed its World War II Bomber B-25 'Maid in the Shade' on Monday at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. The bomber will be available for view, tours and flights through Sunday and will be joined Friday by the Dixie Wing CAF's Red Nose P-51D.

"Each model had its own unique personality. The B-25 had exceptional armament, but it was an awfully noisy plane. Every one of those cylinders coughed out noise," he said.

Atkinson is a life member of the CAF and has participated in a number of the organization's tours.

"When we toured with the B-29 squadron, thousands of people would

come to see the plane. Young people wanted to see, touch or get a ride in it or spend time talking to a 91-year-old survivor like me," he said. "We call ourselves the Ghost Squadron and to me, we are the walking, talking, living, loving guys that represent the ones that didn't come back."

'MAID IN THE SHADE'

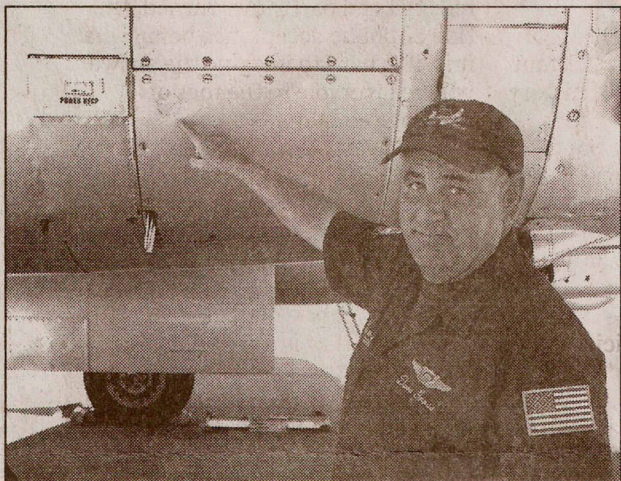
What: B-25 and Red Nose P-51D display, tours and rides

When: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Sunday

Where: Mount Vernon Outland Airport, Mount Vernon

To reserve a flight: Call 480-322-5503

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Dave Gross of the Airbase Arizona Commemorative Air Force points Wednesday to a patch on a B-25 making a stop at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. The bomber was likely damaged by ground fire on a mission during World War II.

B-25: Is visiting Mount Vernon

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The B-25's stop in Mount Vernon coincides with the 5th annual Plane & Pilot Midwest LSA Expo today through Saturday at the airport.

The expo will feature 40 exhibitors from light sport aircraft manufacturing industry, airport manager Chris Collins said.

"The airplane manufacturers bring their newest and greatest models. The exhibitors are really happy

with our expo because they sell airplanes here," he said. "In the past, we've drawn 650 to 1,000 people and we hope to triple that number this year. People are coming from all over the country to see planes and take demo flights so they can make informed decisions."

The expo runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Saturday.

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