

Take time to listen in on history

There's a bunch of movies out there covering every war Americans have played a part in. Often those movies focus largely on the faster planes, if they focus on planes at all. Rarely do you see a feature film with a heavy emphasis on the bombers.

But the bombers are not forgotten. You may have heard or read stories from soldiers about ground battles which hinged on a fly-over and strafing. Then again, you may not have had that opportunity.

Here's your chance.

This weekend is the annual Experimental Aircraft Association's Fly-In and Veterans Reunion at Mt. Vernon-Outland Airport. As it has for the last decade, the event is expected to draw many area veterans. World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq — each one will be represented. Many will wear uniforms or other signs of the armed forces. Some will share a few words on their experiences — stories to tell about the war.

It's a time to listen.

Listen in part to try to imagine yourself in their shoes. Listen closer to realize you may be hearing some details that the big history books may never record.

One of this weekend's featured planes is the P-51 Mustang. It was a fighter plane with six 50-caliber machine guns and an unheard-of six-hour flight ability. The plane was so feared in World War II that Nazi top commander Hermann Goering is quoted as saying "The day I saw Mustangs over Berlin, I knew the jig was up."

But while its highly recognizable Merlin engine was a sound of hope for soldiers on the ground, often it was because the Mustangs were escorting B-17 bombers — nicknamed the "Flying Fortress" and "the Queen of Bombers." This was the plane credited with turning the tide of the war. The B-17s could take on more damage and still keep on flying, reaching their targets and returning with the crew intact. The B-17s flew in every combat zone of WWII.

So when you hear soldiers tell stories of the bombers, take time to listen in on history.