

PAPER DOLL



**Air to Air photography
by David Leininger**

North American B-25J-30-NC Mitchell, s/n 44-86698, was delivered to the US Army Air Force on 15th June 1945 and flown directly to a storage facility in Independence, Missouri that September. It would remain there until moved to Pyote, Texas for further storage. In October 1951 the aircraft was flown to Brookley Air Depot, Alabama where it was overhauled and redesignated a TB-25J prior to a transfer via the Military Assistance Program to the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in December 1951, being allocated s/n 5248. In service with the RCAF the aircraft was employed as a trainer and executive transport, featuring dual controls. Struck off Charge in November 1961 the Mitchell was sold to Hicks and Lawrence, Ltd. of Ostrander, Ontario, Canada the following month. The Mitchell joined the civil register as CF-NWU and would see two more Canadian owners before returning to the US with L.H. Vance and T.M. Cooper in 1967. The aircraft was flown to Addison, Texas and registered N534VT. In January 1969 I.N. Burchinal of Paris, Texas purchased the B-25 and incorporated it in his warbird flight training program and displayed it at his Flying Tiger Air Museum. Six years later it would be displayed with another museum, the SST Aviation Museum in Kissimmee, Florida whilst under the ownership of Daniel Jackson. August 1982 saw a return north of the border, it having been purchased by G&M Aircraft of St. Albert, Alberta, Canada. Registered C-GUNO the aircraft operated as a fire bomber as Tanker number 3 and thereafter 338. It would

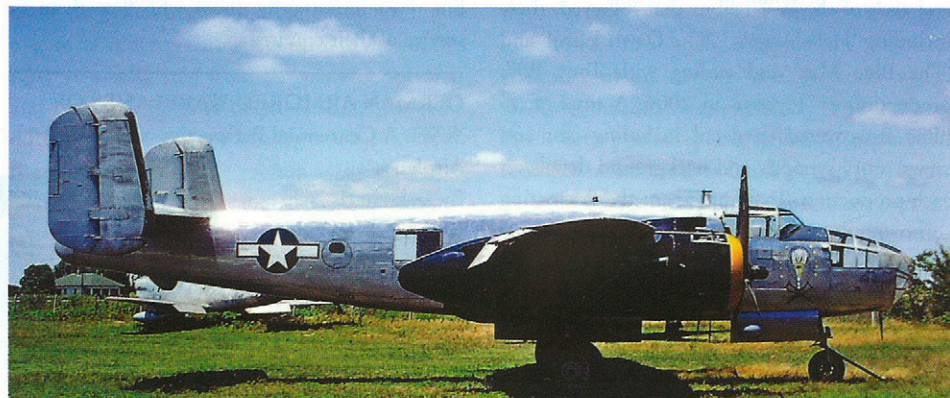
have the distinction of being the last B-25 in the world to operate in this capacity, being withdrawn from service in 1992. Sold in 1998 to Mitchell Mania, LLC (principals Lynn Hunt, Steve Penning, Bill Manly), Santa Rosa, CA, registration

changed to N325N and the Mitchell was restored to military configuration and christened 'Sunday Punch', a tribute to the B-25 air crews who operated in the Pacific. The aircraft it represented flew in the CBI (China-Burma-India) theatre with the



CF-NWU at Malton Canada in a silver scheme circa February 1967.

via Tony Clarke



N534VT at Paris, Texas in June 1977 whilst part of the SST Aviation Museum in Kissimmee.

via Tony Clarke

81st Bomb Squadron ('The Battering Rams'), 12th Bomb Group ('The Earth Quakers'), 10th Air Force. Post-war this Mitchell was turned over to the Nationalist Chinese and its ultimate fate is unknown.

In May 2012 44-86698 was sold to Ron Fagen of Granite Falls, MN and prior to delivery was subject to an annual inspection by B-25 experts Aero Trader at Chino, CA. This would progress through to an IRAN (Inspect and Replace As Necessary) and subsequently a minor restoration. The aircraft was partially broken down in order to undertake anti corrosion treatment, skin repairs and system overhauls. This saw all new hydraulics, wiring, fuel cells, avionics, instrument overhaul, turret and installation of other armament components (Aero Trader makes .50 calibre replica guns) completed. A glass bombardier nose which came with the purchase of the aircraft was installed. This new old stock item was already fitted out with all equipment. Fagen's preference was to own a B-25 with a 'glass house' because they believe the bombardier seat is, "The best seat in the house". The 'Sunday Punch' solid gun nose is on display in the museum. An interior clean up saw passenger seats, insulation material and all new Aero Trader plexiglass installed throughout. The team also fitted two new engines and overhauled the QECs and propellers.



via Scott Thompson

The aircraft would have the distinction of being the last B-25 in the world to operate as a fire bomber being withdrawn from service in 1992.



Jack Cook

From 1998 the Mitchell would be restored to military configuration and flown as 'Sunday Punch.'



Scott Thompson

Seen in August 2013 under restoration with Chino based B-25 experts Aero Trader, the aircraft would be fitted with the glasshouse nose and emerge in a new paint scheme.



Scott Thompson

Some two and a half years later the bomber was complete and had been christened 'Paper Doll,' this loosely based on the scheme carried by a B-25 which had logged 125 combat missions with the 447 Bomb Squadron, 321 Bomb Group operating from Corsica in the Mediterranean in 1944.

This scheme was arrived at following some research into B-25s with a substantial number of missions to its credit, the choice was narrowed to

The flight deck is entered through a hinged hatch that contains a ladder, located in the belly of the aircraft.

two candidates – 'GI JOE,' a 132 mission veteran of the 487th Bomb Squadron, 340th Bomb Group, one of 13 which carried variations of Bill Mauldin 'dog face' cartoon, and 'Paper Doll.' Diane found the choice relatively easy, "Let's face it, 'Paper Doll' is much prettier."

The Mitchell was thereafter flown to Fagen Fighters WWII Museum, Granite Falls, Minnesota and the freshly restored bomber made its public debut at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh just

Centre Spread:

P-51D Mustang 'Twilight Tear' served with the 78th Fighter Group based at Duxford in 1945, the personal mount of Lt. Hubert 'Bill' Davis. Photographer DAVID LEININGER captured the fighter on escort duty with B-25 Paper Doll. Both aircraft are based at Fagen Fighters WWII Museum.



David Leininger



a few weeks later where it joined several of its kind in celebrating the 74th Anniversary of the first flight of the iconic type.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to Diane Fagen & Scott Thompson (www.aerovintage.com) author of 'B-25 Mitchell in Civil Service' (see below right).

Attention to detail. A look into the bomb bay reveals four 250 lb (113 kg) dummy bombs. The Mitchell's standard bomb load was around 3,000 lbs (1,360 kgs)



Period photo of the original 'PAPER DOLL'. Note the two tone camouflage which is not replicated on the Fagen aircraft for ease of maintenance.



'GI JOE,' one of 13 B-25s which carried variations of the Bill Mauldin 'dog face' cartoon. This scheme was also considered, but it was decided that 'PAPER DOLL' was more aesthetically pleasing!





