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New bird at Air Zoo



Wildcat...Hellcat...Bearcat...Flying Tiger...these are among the historic military aircraft that inspired the nickname "Kalamazoo Air Zoo."

These and other vintage war planes on display at the Kalamazoo Aviation History Museum preserve our nation's military aviation heritage for present and future generations.

The "Air Zoo" collection of 28 aircraft is unique, not only because of its quality, but also because many of the planes are in flying condition. Weather permitting, one of the immaculately restored planes takes to the air each day.

Now, one of the most famous bombers of World War II has joined the rest of the award-winning warbirds at the museum.

A falcon-nose B-25 Mitchell from the 345 Bombardment Group, the famous Air Apaches of the South Pacific, was unveiled this past Veterans' Day. This variant of the bomber, named after aviator great General "Bully" Mitchell, saw service in low level attacks on enemy shipping, both strafing and skip bombing Japanese naval vessels.

The elaborate paint scheme of the airplane—falcon's beak on the nose, bright yellow speed rings around the engines, the

Apache symbol on the vertical stabilizers—resembles the same paint scheme of ship 115 which flew one of the most important missions of World War II.

On Aug. 19, 1945, this plane, with two other B-25s, an escort of P-39 Lightnings and a rescue B-17 backup, was sent out over an expanse of the Pacific Ocean to intercept two Japanese bombers. These were no ordinary enemy aircraft though. They were painted white, had large green crosses on their fuselages, and carried the Imperial envoys that were to arrange Japan's unconditional surrender which ended the war.

Four of the crew members from that mission, which was the "beginning of the end of the war," attended the Veteran's Day dedication ceremony.

While ship 115 played an important role in the "beginning of the end," 16 other B-25s played an equally important role in the "beginning." On April 18, 1942, the USS Hornet, off the coast of Japan, launched these 16 special bombers on America's first retaliatory strike after Pearl Harbor. It was the start of the downfall of the

Imperial Japanese Empire and the ships were those of Congressional Medal of Honor winner Gen. Jimmy Doolittle.

One of Doolittle's Raiders, Lt. Jack Sims from Kalamazoo, took part in the unveiling ceremony. A special display of Sims' artifacts is on display to complement the newest aircraft to join the "Air Zoo" stables.

According to museum executive director Bob Ellis, the dedication of the B-25 celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first flight of the aircraft and marks the culmination of a painstaking restoration process lasting more than two years. Ellis says more than 15 employees and volunteers in the museum's restoration center spent more than 10,000 manhours to complete the refurbishing.

Ellis also reports that the museum obtained the B-25 from Jack Hanson, an antique auto collector in Manistee, Michigan, who traded one of the cars in his collection for the B-25, then

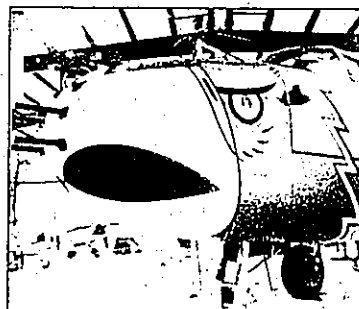
sold it to the museum. Hanson told the museum that one of the highlights of the career of this particular B-25 was its service over the Philippine Islands during World War II.

At the "Air Zoo," the B-25 joins a menagerie that includes a Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat, Republic P-47D Thunderbolt and Curtiss P-40-N Warhawk. Although most of the museum's collection is centered around World War II aircraft, it includes planes that participated in Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Air museum visitors may also examine engines, vintage uniforms, combat pictures, model planes and authentic memorabilia from both the Allied and Axis powers. There are murals of World War II action photographs with aircraft, ships and troops in astonishing panoramas.

You can visit the "Air Zoo" by either car or plane. By car, take Interstate 94 to the Portage Road Exit (#78). Take Portage Road south two traffic lights, then turn east at Milham Road to the museum. By plane, simply fly to the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport and taxi up on the museum's flight deck.

Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Saturday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday. A nominal admission fee is charged. For more information call 616-382-6555.



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WINTER TIME EVENTS

Muskegon Winter Games	Jan. 12 - Feb. 23, 1991
Jaycees Snowfest '91	Jan. 24 - 27, 1991
Montague SkiDooFest	Feb. 1 - 3, 1991
Great Lakes Invitational Snowmobile Challenge	Feb. 8 - 9, 1991
Enduro West Michigan Championship	Feb. 15 - 17, 1991

For Information On Events & Year-Round Activities Contact:

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