



One of the Great Airplanes from 'The Greatest Generation'

EAA's B-17 Flying Fortress comes to (CITY) for flights, tours

For America's young men 70 years ago, their thoughts weren't on college and careers. They were focused on survival and a battle bigger than any of them individually during World War II.

For some that meant in a foxhole in Europe, Africa or some Pacific island, or perhaps aboard a battleship with eyes focused for enemy submarines. For thousands of young men, most barely out of high school themselves, it meant long days airborne in a freezing aluminum tube, hoping that it wasn't their day to be unlucky.

A rare B-17 bomber, owned and operated by the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, is making a stop locally as part of its nationwide tour that salutes those veterans and helps the rest of us discover that history. The aircraft will be at (FILL IN LOCAL INFORMATION HERE, AS WELL AS DATES AND TIMES). All are invited to see and fly in this historic aircraft.

More than 12,000 of these bombers were built during the early 1940s. More than 4,000 were lost during the war, mostly in high-danger bombing missions over Europe. That made the odds not in favor of those 18- to 25-year-olds who manned the airplane. Still, the airplane itself evokes strong memories for those who came back from the conflict.

“I love the airplane,” said Capt. Bob Abresch of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who piloted B-17s for the 398th Bomb Group during World War II. “It had a great record, was nice to fly and very well built.”

This particular B-17 currently on national tour is named *Aluminum Overcast*, in honor of a term coined by a wartime reporter who witnessed the flying armada of bombers overhead and remarked on the *Aluminum Overcast* that would soon be flying over Germany.

This particular airplane had an interesting life before arriving in 1981 at EAA, an international organization of more than 180,000 members dedicated to recreational flying. The bomber was built in 1944 and delivered to the U.S. Army at the end of World War II. It was eventually sold as surplus for just \$750, and spent nearly 40 years doing assorted jobs ranging from a firebomber in the western United States to a mapping aircraft over the Middle East.

In the late 1970s, the aircraft was purchased by an Oklahoma group to be restored as a World War II bomber. Time and finances were against the private group, though, so it donated the aircraft to EAA in 1981 with the provision it be restored to flying status. It took EAA more than a decade to fully restore the airplane, which then began its national tours in 1994. The aircraft is now more than 90 percent accurate to its wartime construction, with allowances for updated technology in such areas as navigation and brakes.

“It is a truly amazing airplane to fly,” said Sean Elliott, an EAA vice president who regularly flies the aircraft on tour and gives flight tests to other B-17 pilots. “It’s more than an airplane, however. It’s a piece of living history that allows us to honor our veterans and talk about their sacrifices. It’s a true privilege to be able to do that throughout the country.”

More information about the airplane’s history and how (CITY)-area residents can tour and fly in this historic bomber is available at www.B17.org. The airplane’s stop in this area is supported by the volunteer efforts of local EAA members and chapters who host the airplane during its national tours.

