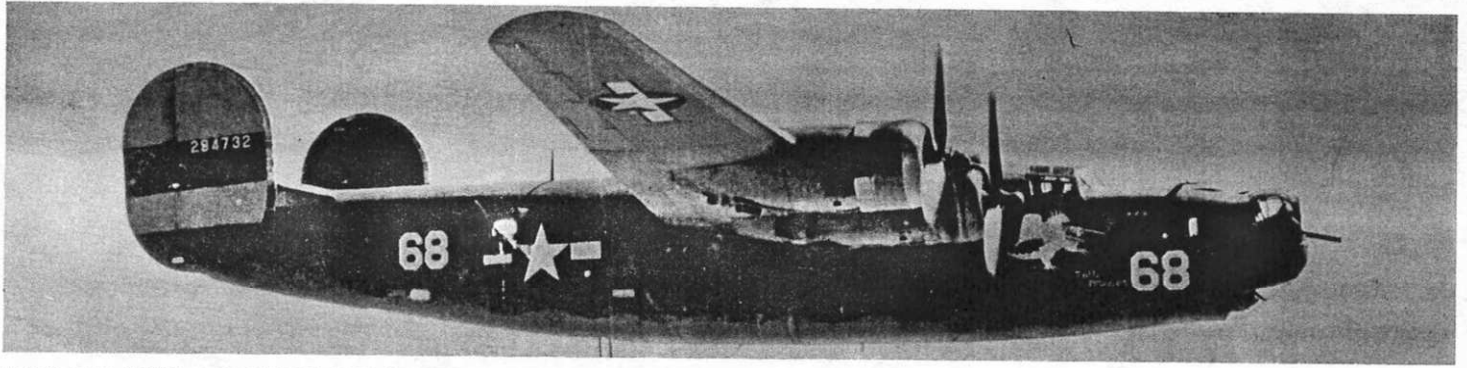


# THE B-24 IN COMBAT

Editor's Note: Taken from the Pilot's Training Manual, you may find this testimonial to the B-24 amazing after your wartime experience with this bird. But here we are to talk about it!



"TAIL DRAGON", A B-24 H-15 ONE OF A BATCH OF 66 IDENTICAL AIRCRAFT BUILT BY FORD AT WILLOW RUN, MICHIGAN, SHOWN ASSIGNED TO THE 766TH SQUADRON, 461ST BOMB GROUP CIRCA 1944-1945 (ITALY)

*767 Sq. see Remnants by Stanley A. Schwenken*

The B-24 is used today all over the world. It is the workhorse of every air force. Its formations are roaring over mountains, seas, desert, and arctic, laden with tons of destruction for the enemy.

Liberators are being used more and more in combat for one conclusive reason: The B-24 has everything—speed, climbing power, carrying ability, and above all, guts. The B-24's combat record is best told by those who have flown it through flak and swarming fighters, in mission after mission, and know first hand what it can do.

## WHAT COMBAT LEADERS SAY:

"The B-24 has proved itself capable of delivering tremendous blows against the enemy over extremely long ranges, under unfavorable weather conditions and against heavy enemy opposition. If the gunners are properly trained, they can create havoc among enemy fighters. I have seen formations of B-24's penetrate heavily defended battle zones, completely destroy their target, fight off twice their number of enemy fighters and, through their maneuverability and firepower, destroy over 50% of all attacking enemy fighters without loss to themselves."

### There and Back

"In the words of the old-time pilots, 'She'll take you there and bring you back.' I have seen B-24's shot up by 88-mm. anti-aircraft so badly it seemed impossible that the airplane could stay in the air. One pilot brought his B-24 back to base with half the rudder control completely shot away. We have had airplanes come back under almost unbelievable handicaps: with propellers shot off; with direct hits in gasoline cells by 20,40 and 88-mm. explosive shells; with the 2 lower engine supports knocked completely off; with both ailerons gone; after complete loss of rudder control; after loss of elevator control. Airplanes have returned with controls so badly damaged they were landed on autopilot."

### Maneuverability

"A good gunner will conserve his ammunition and make every bullet count. I was caught once, separated from a formation, with no guns working and 500 miles behind enemy front lines, by an enemy plane which had a full load of ammunition. We successfully evaded his attacks and forced him to expend all his ammunition. Maneuverability alone enabled us to return to base. One B-24 was separated from formation over the target and attacked by 15 ME 109's. Through skillful maneuvering and use of firepower this crew shot down 8 of the enemy fighters in a running battle of 100 miles and returned safely to base. In another instance a B-24 with the tail turret out was attacked in a running battle. Enemy fighters knew the vulnerable spot and, as they approached from the rear, the airplane was maneuvered so that the top turret gunner could fire at them. Nine enemy planes were shot down in this manner."

### Instrument Flying

"The B-24 is a good instrument airplane. About 80% of our flying was instrument or formation or a combination of the two. It is a good indication of your flying ability and of the flight characteristics of the airplane when you can fly formation for 5 or 6 hours and do it well and then go back on instruments and fly a good compass course for 3 or 4 hours. The ability to get your plane back sometimes depends on this. I know that during training in the U.S. it is pretty hard to sit under a hood and fly instruments when you could just be cruising around. It's hard to sit in a Link trainer for hours at a time and work out your procedure. But it pays off when you get out where you have to be good in formation and instrument flying."

### GUTS

"The housing around the propeller and 3 cylinders of our No. 4 engine were shot out. Two feet of prop on No. 1 engine was smashed, tearing a foot-

-and-a-half hole in the left aileron. The engine was vibrating like a bucking bronco. And we had a wing cell leak in No. 3. We were both flying that airplane with every ounce of skill we possessed. We put on 10% of flaps to get the best lift without too much drag, and kept our wings straight by using rudder. We muddled through the fighter attack and staggered away from the target on 2 1/2 engines. To gain altitude to cross a mountain range, we threw out everything that was movable, including oxygen bottles, gas masks, ammunition, radio equipment, and everything a screwdriver could get loose. Somehow she brought us back. We had to crash-land the plane but nobody was hurt. The first thing I did after we got away from the plane was to kiss the navigator."

### Come-Back

"One of the B-24's was hit on the left wing, just outside the outboard engine. I thought the wing would fall off, since the shot went right through the main structure. You could have dropped a barrel through the hole, but the airplane continued to fly formation. A few seconds later a direct hit ripped a big hole in the bomb bay, severed the aileron cable, knocked out the hydraulic and electric systems and the oxygen system. We escorted it 800 miles to the base. It landed without ailerons and without brakes and was back in service in about 3 weeks."

### Range

A fully loaded Liberator crossed the Atlantic in 6 hours and 12 minutes. The raid on the Rumanian oil refineries was a round trip of 2500 miles. Raids from Midway Island on Jap-held Wake Island involved a round trip of 2400 miles. British Air Chief Marshal Sir Christopher Courtney termed the Liberator the "most successful of all anti-submarine aircraft now used by the United Nations." The combat record of the B-24 speaks for itself.