
The Pima Air Museum B-24

by Rhodes Arnold Lt Col USAFJR

Editor's Note: The B-24 that attendees will see at the 1998 reunion in Tucson, has a colorful history. This particular B-24J was presented to the Pima Air Museum by the Indian Air Force. It flew patrol missions after the war until the early sixties accumulating some thousands of hours of flight time. This proves that the basic airframe design was sound and with proper maintenance it could fly almost indefinitely. This is the story of how it was ferried from India to Arizona. The story was originally published in the Airline Pilot.



The Flying Fortress, star of "12 O'clock High" on television, is familiar today even to the younger generation, but the good old "Liberator bomber" which was manufactured in greater numbers and dropped more bombs, is as unknown as a freeze on the Fourth of July.

The Boeing B-17 Fortress was the glamour girl of the heavies early in World War II, but the Convair B-24 Liberator was the workhorse, flying millions of mission miles from England, North Africa, Italy, India, Australia, the South Pacific and even the Aleutians.

At least ten B-17s are on display in the United States and a few may be flying as borate bombers, research aircraft, and movie stars, but only five of the 18,300-plus B-24s are to be seen: a D at the Air Force Museum, an M at Lackland Air Force Base, the All American, another belonging to Kermit Weeks and, a LB-30 in the Confederate Air Force.

Our National Air Museum, sad to say, did not see fit to save a 'Lib'! Only once in a while an ex-Navy Privateer, re-engined with R-2600s from junked B-25s, can be seen dropping slurry on forest

fires in the West; but a real, live, twin-tailed Whistling Outhouse is hard to find. Locating an example for the Tucson Air Museum would be an improbable task at best, but fate works in strange ways.

B-24 Free; Ferry \$12,000

In this age of B-52s and the B-2, the likelihood of there being a B-24 on the active list of a major power was nil; not even the Banana Republics in Central America could be expected to have a specimen or two. So, when the eyes of one who loved the B-24 fell on an article in an English magazine, the statement that 16 B-24s were being used by the Indian Air Force seemed utterly unbelievable. Doubtful as the report seemed, a request for donation of one of the old craft was airmailed to the Chief of the Air Staff in New Delhi, halfway around the world.

In due time, much to the surprise of the writer and his cohorts in the 9428th Air Reserve Squadron, a reply advised that the Government of India had decided to honor this unusual request, but with the stipulation that the cost of delivery must be borne lo-