

HISTORY FLIES IN TO VISIT WWII B-29 IS LAST ONE FLYING IN U. S.

Fifi surged through Allentown yesterday, engines howling, her 141-foot wingspan spreading over softball fields and hamburger joints, over suburban lawns, swimming pools and motels.

If a bombardier had been on board, he could have looked down the B-29 bomber's sights to Donut City, Thrift Drug, and an Acme supermarket.

But Fifi landed here yesterday as part of a peacetime mission to give the public a look at the last World War II plane of its kind still flying in America.

"They've melted them (B-29s) into beer cans," said Bob Freeman, a colonel in the Confederate Air Force, a Harlingen, Texas-based organization that brought the B-29 to Allentown.

Once, the United States had 3,968 B-29 bombers in its fleet. Each could carry up to 20,000 pounds in its payload. And each routinely flew 3,000-mile journeys over the Pacific during World War II, missions that required an 11-man crew and often lasted 22 hours.

Included in the B-29 fleet was the Enola Gay, which became considerably more famous than Fifi when it dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

"These are the war birds, the ghost squadron, the era that is gone," said **Troy Tigner**, Fifi's flight engineer. "This is the one that ended the war ... I get chills every time we take her up, every time we have one more time to fly her."

Tigner's organization, the Confederate Air Force, includes 9,000 flight enthusiasts who raise money and sponsor air shows to keep roughly 100 vintage World War II fighter planes flying.

Fifi and Diamond 'Lil, an L-B 40/ B-24 Liberator, are on view at Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Airport through Sunday.

"We are not trying to glorify war with this. We are trying to preserve the peace by showing a piece of American history," said Paul E. Ace, a Stroudsburg resident and Confederate Air Force member. "We're not supposed to be out here telling war stories and wearing medals."

When Edward Hering saw Fifi yesterday, he remembered a few things about his time in Guam during World War II. Back then, ground crew members etched their names on the gray sides of B-29s. Some liked to write nasty little messages to the enemy on bombs as they were loading them into the plane's massive belly. The fliers named planes after girlfriends.

"That way you'd just say something like, 'Flossie's acting up.' Or, 'Janie's leaking oil,'" said Hering, an honorary Confederate Air Force member who lives in Linden, N.J.

Many Confederate Air Force members who came to the airport yesterday to greet the planes as they flew in from a Massachusetts air show sported flight suits and patches decorated with wings and aviation logos. A few wore hats emblazoned with the words, "B-29 Flight Crew."

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