

B-25 bomber to have rides

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DANVILLE — This year's Balloons Over Vermilion (BOV) will feature rides in a World War II B-25 bomber.

Enjoy the flight experience of a lifetime on the WWII B-25 "Champaign Gal," a two-engine medium bomber manufactured by North American Aviation.

Time from take-off to landing (inflight time) is about 25 minutes. The total time in aircraft is about 40 minutes which includes engine start and taxi time.

Mike Vadeboncoeur, with Midwest Aero Restorations, Ltd at the Vermilion Regional Airport, said they were excited when they heard the aircraft would arrive for this year's event.

"We've had another B-25 bomber here at the 2017 Vermilion Regional Air Expo and it was a big hit," Vadeboncoeur said. "The B25 is of course a WWII Medium Bomber characterized by its twin radial type engines and twin vertical stabilizers (tail section).

It was also famous for the 1942 Raid on Tokyo led by Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle as a surprise attack just four months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. It was a daring mission as the bombers had to take off from an aircraft carrier, something it was not intended to do."

"Adding to that, there was no coming back to the carrier. They had to fly on to eastern China and attempt emergency landings due to minimum fuel," he added.

According to Vadeboncoeur, North American Aviation was the builder of the B-25 and they built nearly 10,000 aircraft. Today, around 40 or so are flyable. Many more are in museums or on display all over the world.

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"We of course at Midwest Aero specialize in building P-51 Mustangs and AT-6 Texans also manufactured in WWII by North American Aviation, so we have a soft spot for all NAA aircraft. I was lucky enough to get a flight in a B-

said they have a nice museum in Ohio.

B-25 rides at BOV on Friday and Saturday start at \$425.

Airport Manager Alex Gale also said the airport is incredibly excited to have the B-25 at BOV this year.

Mitchell was an American twin-engine medium bomber manufactured by North American Aviation. Allied air forces flew it in every theater of World War II, and it was used by many other air forces after the war, seeing service across four decades.

Built in 1944 by North American, the museum's B-25J served with the

25 about 25 years ago over the Los Angeles Hills with some friends who owned one. It was a fantastic experience and highly recommended. The beautiful radial engine sound, the smell of burnt gasoline and oils, and the realization that you are actually flying in something that has so much history associated with it is hard to describe,” said Vadeboncoeur. “Always remembering the sacrifice that so many young Americans made to ensure our very freedom we have to this day.”

The bomber is just part of the two-day BOV event. Vadeboncoeur says he’s never been in a hot air balloon.

“But from what I hear it’s fantastic. They say you can communicate with people on the ground; see the countryside from varying altitudes at a beautiful slow speed. Of course, flying an airplane is quite different from that, but flying has its own beauty and options as far as being able to fly in stronger winds, where balloons are limited,” he said.

Vadeboncoeur said he’s known of the operation of the B-25 coming to BOV for a long time. He

She knew they’re anticipating rides being given (weather permitting) in the evening and will have the airplane available for tours when it is not flying.

“We have had World War II-era aircraft like this in the past. In fact, I found my love for aviation when (the airport) had a B-17 and B-24 here,” Gale said. “I went for a ride on the B-17 and there has never been anything like it. I believe there is an interest in our community for exposure to these planes, whether it is going for a flight or just being able to walk through. These planes are living history and some of the best-preserved pieces of history in existence. Our community has a rich history of aviation, and specifically World War II era, thanks to all of the activity we have with Midwest Aero Restorations and the worldclass work they perform on World War II aircraft on a daily basis.”

The Champaign Aviation Museum in Urbana, Ohio that is bringing the bomber is a non-profit dedicated to preserving aviation history for current and future generations.

According to the museum, the North American B-25

USAAF for 13 years. It was used as a trainer, transport and personnel transport. In 1957 it was transferred to the famous “airplane boneyard” at Davis-Monthan AFB where it was stored until about 1959 when it was bought by a private company and fought fires in Canada and the USA. It continued to be used as an airtanker until the late 1980s when it was restored to its wartime specifications.

In 2008, the Champaign Aviation Museum in Ohio acquired the aircraft and has been flying and meticulously maintaining it ever since. They regularly fly the B-25 to airshows, events, warbird ride experiences and for flyovers.