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SCHAF
3100 Devine Street
Columbia, SC 29205

HOW CAN I HELP?

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation faces an important task—saving for the future the rare B-25C Mitchell bomber that represents a vital element in the state’s aviation legacy. To accomplish such bold goals, SCHAF needs assistance in many forms. Monetary contributions are the fuel that will power the engines of this foundation. And in a world with so many entities vying for your financial support and so many options in which to invest your valuable time, your help will be needed to fulfill the task. Airplane and vehicle mechanics, metal fabricators, welders, electricians, and other complementary skill sets will soon be needed—and badly. Please go to our website and sign up as a contributor, member and/or a volunteer. Many different levels of participation and donations are available to choose from.



Donations Wanted

Any items of World War II or earlier aviation memorabilia are wanted, especially items with SC connections. Aircraft parts, flight manuals, B-25 technical manuals, photographs, uniforms, flight suits and/or any other flying equipment, medals, paperwork, logbooks or any other items of this type are requested for the foundation. We need your help in the form of donations of this type for use in our proposed displays and other interpretations.

South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation
 3100 Devine Street
 Columbia, South Carolina 29205
803-731-3254
www.SCHistoricAviation.org

South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation

“Saving the past for the Future”



The South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation (SCHAF) has been formed to preserve and convey the valuable contributions citizens of this state have made to the history of flight. From the early days of aviation-both civilian and military-to the barnstorming years that followed WWI, the very early speed, distance and endurance competitions, to airplane racing, and the race into space, South Carolina citizens have played an, as yet, untold story.



The Beginning

The appearance of the B-25C shortly after its recovery from Lake Greenwood.

THE STORY OF A SPECIAL B-25C MITCHELL BOMBER

Our B-25C Mitchell Medium Bomber's fascinating history is centered in South Carolina and it holds a unique place in the state's WWII efforts and contributions.

The B-25 became an aviation icon at Columbia Army Air Base (CAAB), developed as Lexington County Airport before the U.S. entered the war. Then Pearl Harbor happened. Response to the Japanese attack militarized the airport which ramped up rapidly to become perhaps the largest B-25 advanced training base in the war effort.

From this base came the volunteer crews of the famous "Doolittle Raid" on Tokyo. Lt. Col. James Doolittle came to the Midlands to seek volunteers because, as he later said, this was where the best B-25 crews were.

The B-25C we now have is the only known intact aircraft remaining from the fleet used to train the airmen who perpetuated Doolittle's legacy at the base. Given tail number 41-13285 by its builders at North American Aviation's Inglewood, California, assembly plant, the plane was delivered to CAAB in 1942.

From that point forward, this plane's history evolved almost entirely in this state, specifically in the training of B-25 crews in the advanced skills of gunnery and low-level bombing. CAAB crews took their hard-earned skills with them to aerial battlefields world-wide where the B-25 Bomber had real impact for the U.S. and Allied cause.

On D-Day, June 6th, 1944, while Allied forces were storming ashore at Normandy, France, this plane was on yet another training mission. At this point in its history, our plane was on temporary assignment to the Greenville Army Air Base (GAAB), a CAAB auxiliary base. While stationed at GAAB, GF-2 was painted on the plane's fuselage to designate Greenville AAB, Foxrot Squadron, Plane Number 2. An earlier pilot or ground crew had given the plane the name "Skunkie", but by 6/6/44, that nickname had been painted over.

On this day, while practicing low-level bombing runs over Lake Greenwood, the instructor pilot swooped a little too low, and when the propellers touched the water, he had to ditch. The aircraft sank in minutes. There were no serious crew injuries, but the plane was lost under the water and, shortly afterwards, was declared unrecoverable by the Army Air Force.

After 39 years lost under the waters of Lake Greenwood, the plane was recovered in 1983 by a group led by Mat Self of Greenwood. From that point forward, the plane passed through a succession of owner groups, and ultimately was returned to Columbia, specifically to the Curtiss Wright Hangar at Jim Hamilton-L.B. Owens Airport.

A cosmetic restoration was undertaken by volunteers and completed in time for our plane to be used in 1992 as a centerpiece for the 50th Anniversary Reunion of the Doolittle Raiders being held in Columbia, where recruitment for these crews took place.

Ten years later this plane once again was a focal point, this time of the Raiders' 60th reunion. It was repainted to appear identical to Lt. Col. Doolittle's B-25. Since then the plane languished in virtual limbo, with little being done to further its preservation, much less its restoration.



On display in front of SC State Museum during 50th Doolittle Raider Reunion in 1992.

This is where the newly-formed South Carolina Historic Aviation Foundation (SCHAF) came into being. Recognizing that the plane's fate was in jeopardy, SCHAF was formed. Securing ownership and accepting stewardship of the B-25C Mitchell Bomber was the new organization's prevailing initiative.

The level of restoration the plane can receive will be determined by the level of interest to be generated within – and out of – state for saving this valuable piece of South Carolina aviation history for future generations to learn from and enjoy.

Already, research steps have begun to determine preservation priorities.



SCHAF is mounting an ambitious effort that will lead to a restoration of this airplane. We believe that this airplane can and should serve as an ambassador for the State of South Carolina and a memorial to the war efforts of the citizens of the state. Beyond this, we hope to build a first class facility as the repository for this airplane and to build a more complete story of the history of aviation in SC. This story will be told through the artifacts we will collect and preserve on behalf of the citizens of SC. Displays of other important aircraft and memorabilia from the notables of SC aviation are envisioned.

For more information go to
www.SCHistoricAviation.org