

# *Mitchell Masterpieces*

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF B-25 WARBIRDS IN BUSINESS

VOLUME 3



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AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF B-25 WARBIRDS IN BUSINESS

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WIM NIJENHUIS

Lanasta



*Eleven B-25s at a reunion on 17-18 April, 2017 at Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio. It was the 75th Anniversary reunion of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders. The B-25s from across the United States were in attendance to honour the raiders. The anniversary was attended by the sole surviving member of the Doolittle Raiders Lt. Richard E. Cole. The airplanes are all in airworthy condition with beautiful nose art, mostly derived from the original art displayed by their counterparts in World War II. (Dennis Nijenhuis)*

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# FOREWORD

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By Lt-Gen (retired) Bart Hoitink,  
Former chairman of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight

## *THE SOUND OF FREEDOM!*

Sometimes you meet special people. Ordinary people who make a choice under difficult circumstances. A choice that will determine the rest of their lives. A choice that has contributed to our freedom today. Some people resisted the oppression during World War Two. Others decided to take to the skies to work for our freedom. They chose a dangerous mission. Many airmen did not return from their missions over occupied territory.

Among the many aircraft deployed during the war and the liberation were B-25 Mitchell bombers and Spitfires fighters. These aircraft were part of Dutch units of the RAF No. 320 and 322 Squadron respectively, and two of them now of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight.

One special aircraft catches the eye. Our B-25N Mitchell named "Sarinah". The Mitchell was employed by the ML KNIL, the Military Aviation Department of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. In addition, the Mitchell was used in No. 320 (Dutch) Squadron in the Royal Air Force. After the war, the Mitchell served in the Netherlands East

Indies during the police actions. After the hostilities, most of the aircraft were handed over to the Indonesian Air Force. In our country, the Mitchell was used by the Naval Aviation Service until 1954 with No. 320 Squadron that was discontinued in 2005. The aircraft mainly served as a Search-And-Rescue aircraft, including during the flood disaster of February 1953.

The B-25 in service with the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight has an American history. The aircraft was in service with the USAF from 1944-1959 and then, through various owners in America, finally sold in 1990 to the Duke of Brabant Air Force (DBAF) in the Netherlands. Ultimately, the aircraft was transferred from the DBAF to the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight in 2010. Meanwhile, in 1999 the colour scheme was adapted to the ML-KNIL period and the aircraft was named "Sarinah".

The sound of the engines gave hope to the people on the ground, soldiers, and civilians. Hope for a speedy release. Hope for a better life. The sound of the aircraft engines



was music to the ears. And at the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight at Gilze-Rijen Air Base, we go back in time and regularly listen to this "music".

A Mitchell bomber, Spitfire, Harvards, Ryan, Piper Cubs, Tiger Moth, and many other aircraft, which have played an important role in Dutch aviation history, are kept in perfect condition by many volunteers.

Special people, but also special aircraft, have fought our freedom. The stories must not be lost, the music must not stop!

Sound of Freedom.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the generous help of other people. Many sources were consulted, and individuals or organisations allowed me the use of their photographs or other material.

I am happy that Bart Hoitink wanted to write the foreword in this book. Bart Hoitink, Lieutenant General (retired) at the Royal Netherlands Air Force, was chairman of the Royal Netherlands Air Force Historical Flight. This organisation operates an impressive fleet of historical aircraft including her flagship "Sarinah", a B-25 which previously flew in the U.S.A. under the name "Cochise". Bart Hoitink was, among other things, helicopter pilot, squadron commander and Inspector General of the Netherlands Armed Forces. He is a great advocate of preserving historic aircraft and keeping this heritage flying. This, however, always under strict safety requirements. Thank you, Bart, for writing the foreword.

A word of thanks goes to Scott A. Thompson from the Sacramento Area, California, and his particularly useful B-25 information and pictures of Aero Vintage Books on [Aerovintage.com](http://Aerovintage.com). Scott Thompson has long held an interest in the B-25 and other warbirds. He started collecting information and photos on these warbirds when he was a teenager and began writing about them in 1980. He has written numerous articles and books, including the beautiful and informative book "B-25 Mitchell in Civil Service".

I want to mention Hélio Higuchi from Brazil. He is researching Latin American military history facts and equipment. He put me in touch with aircraft historians Tony Sapienza in Paraguay, Gary G. Khun and John Davis from the U.S.A., and Claudio Cáceres Godoy, one of the greatest enthusiasts of Chilean aviation history. All five historians provided me with remarkably interesting material and/or pictures. Therefore, many thanks.

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- ★ [www.napoleon130.tripod.com](http://www.napoleon130.tripod.com) of Martin J. Simpson, U.K.

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Photo courtesy: Where known, the photo sources are mentioned.



# INTRODUCTION

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In June 1978, for the first time in my life I saw a flying B-25 at Deelen Air Force Base during the 65th Anniversary of the Royal Netherlands Air Force. This airplane was the civil registered "Gorgeous George-Ann" and was provided with a very nice nose art. Three years later in September 1981, a second B-25 made an air show at Soesterberg Air Force Base. This plane was named "Big Bad Bonnie". Both airplanes were owned by John Hawke and were used in the movie "Hanover Street". At that time, I could not suspect that about 40 years later these same B-25s would be a subject of my third part of "Mitchell Masterpieces". In the meantime, I have been a few times in the U.S. and have seen and photographed several B-25s. A highlight was my last trip in April 2017, with my son Dennis to the B-25 gathering at Grimes Field and Dayton, Ohio, on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Doolittle Raiders. The photos taken during those trips, could be used well for this Volume 3. In this third and final book of "Mitchell Masterpieces" about the North American B-25 Mitchell in service, the B-25s will be described which were operated in civil service

in all different countries. The other Volume 1 dealt with the B-25s in service with the U.S. Armed Forces and Volume 2 covered the B-25s in service with all the foreign military forces.

In 1939, the B-25 was developed as a medium bomber. Therefore, it had a primarily military role during the war. The B-25 bomber served in the armed forces of the United States as well as other allied countries. The major other allied countries were the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union and relatively large numbers of B-25s were also used by the Netherlands, Canada, China, Brazil and Venezuela. But also, some other countries used the B-25 after the war. Only after the war, the B-25 played a role in civil aviation. In the post-war period, various remaining aircraft were sold by the defence ministries. The major supplier was of course the U.S.A. Many aircraft were stripped of their armament and other military equipment and often reached the civilian market through auctions. They passed into private hands and were deployed for transportation of personnel or cargo, for training,

firefighting, agricultural spraying, or other purposes. Even sometimes for smuggling. Some were converted into a luxury business plane.

Many B-25s that served after the war were overall natural aluminium finished. However, there were some colourful examples with or without company logos and other features. Far after the war, the so-called warbird circuit emerged. Old aircraft were refurbished and even made airworthy by historians and aviation enthusiasts. And nowadays, there is an increasing number of warbirds, including the B-25. They are often painted in fantasy colours, but sometimes as much as possible in the colours of their original predecessors at the time of the war. Like the two previous volumes of "Mitchell Masterpieces", this book by no means pretends to be complete. The subject is by far too complex and detailed to be described in full here. It is impossible to describe and illustrate all the companies and individuals who used the B-25 and the history, colours, and markings of all the civilian B-25s in one book. Moreover, the information on many airplanes is no longer available and

often remains a mystery. And sometimes, photographs are scarce or unfortunately of poor quality. Therefore, choices had to be made. There is no plane-by-plane chronological overview. That is why in the different chapters several times the same airplanes are described, but always tailored to the period in which they were employed by the various companies or organisations. Where necessary, the companies as well as museums have been put in alphabetical order as much as possible. This book should serve as a general view of the companies, organisations, and owners and the B-25s they flew. Moreover, the book would not be complete if no attention was paid to the civilian B-25s in the various museums, film industry and the warbird circuit. That is why this has been also described in detail.

Together with Volume 1 and Volume 2 of "Mitchell Masterpieces", the three books give an excellent overall view of the use and service of the B-25 in the various countries and the colours and markings in which they were operated.

Wim Nijenhuis

