

I'm an "airplane nut: I've loved airplanes ever since I can remember. I like to see them sailing through the sky, read about them (I have a LOT of books) and look at pictures of them, and go to air shows to look at and take pictures of them (An interesting aside: I once took a flying lesson in a small light plane, probably a Cessna. I expected to love it, but did not like it at all: go figure.)

I went through a "train thing"—Lionel, HO gauge, real trains—for a while, but that has faded. And, as a teen-ager, with my first driver's license, I became a "car nut". I still am—I've never owned a "cookie-cutter" "plain jane" car—my cars, from the get-go, have all been "special" in one way or the other: from a dual four-barrel carburetor Plymouth Fury (110 miles-per-hour in second gear through the drag strip traps) to a 56.5 miles-per-gallon made-by-Mercedes Smart Car with trick after-market stainless steel dual pipes.

Back to airplanes: in all my readings, and personal encounters, anyone who joins the US Air Force and wants to fly—surprise, surprise—wants to fly fighters, be they P-51 Mustangs back in the day, or F-100 Super Sabres, or F-22's. But, everybody, for a lot of reasons, isn't qualified to fly fighters. So, in all my readings, and personal encounters, many of these folks end up in the next best thing: in the left seat (or right seat) of bombers, lumbering along, while the spiffy fighters do S-turns up above.

I don't think I've ever read of anyone, or heard anyone say, that they always wanted to fly cargo/transport planes. "Boy, I've always wanted to fly a C-82 Flying Box Car..."

"I've Always Wanted To Fly A Flying Box Car"

by **Ralph J. Ferrusi**

Get in touch with Ralph at: rjferrusi@frontiernet.net



And, how many C-82 Flying Box Cars have you ever seen at an air show, or in a War Birds book????? But...fighter planes are glamorous, bombers do what has to be done to win wars, but if it wasn't for the unsung workhorse transport planes, back there behind the scenes, none of the bullets, bombs, or beans get flown to where they have to be.

Over the past several years we've passed Dover Air Force Base in Delaware many many times on our way to Maryland and back. For a long time there were lines of huge, grey C-5A's parked on the tarmac. They've been replaced by huge, grey C-17's. And, at the southern end of the base there's a big collection of older cargo/transport planes parked outside a big Air Mobility Command Museum hangar.

I do have a bit of a history with modern-day transports: Kath and I once flew to Quantico in a LOUD Marine Corps KC-130 Hercules (gotta love those Herks!), and I once sat in the radio operator's seat in a Stewart Air Force Base 105th Airlift Wing C-5A, heading for



Boeing KC-97L Stratotanker.



KC-135E Stratotanker



A-26C Invader

Lackland AFB, a Brigadier General in the left seat, a full bird Colonel in the right. I was like a kid on Christmas morning when they pushed those throttles forward on Stewart's LONG runway.

Back to Dover: usually we were in a rush to get to Maryland, or, back home. But one day we turned off Exit 91 on DE1/US 113 and followed the brown museum signs. We passed a T-33A jet trainer inside the entrance (admission is FREE), and after we parked I practically ran out of the car towards the planes on display on the tarmac. There are "over 30" airlifters, refuelers, jets, helicopters, and gliders, a one-time Vice Presidential jet, and a B-17G and C-47.

We passed a maintenance shed on the way, and poked our noses inside. Right by the door was a Rolls Royce Merlin V-1650 P-51 Mustang engine; I'd never seen one outside an airplane. I touched it; I was, in a word, thrilled: to me, the North American P-51D Mustang is the fighter plane of all time. I've actually dreamt that I was up there flying a P-51D (a good thing the dream ended before I had to figure out how to land it: where was the landing gear switch; the flaps; the throttle???). Not knocking the C-82's or C-119's, but I've never dreamt of being in the left seat of a Flying Boxcar.

Hey, isn't that a C-97??? And a C-119??? A HUGE C-124 Globemaster!!! Wow, an A-26 Invader! A C-54, and a Lockheed Super Constellation. Kath probably thought I had gone nuts, all wide-eyed and snapping pictures... of transport planes!!!

We finally went inside the hangar. Yah just gotta love poking around inside a B-17, wondering what it could possibly be like in the ball turret, and for the cramped, lonely tail gunner. Over 12,000 B-17 Flying Fortresses were produced during World War II. More B-24's were made, but the B-17's (think Memphis Bell) always got the press. At the time of our visit, only about 40 B-17's existed in museums; only about a dozen were still flying.

The B-17G in the Dover museum, Serial Number 44-83624, has an interesting history. It was one of the last B-17's on active duty in the Air Force. In 1957, it was retired to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. It was disassembled at the museum, and flown to Dover in a C-5 (I) in 1989. It was restored over a seven year period as the 381st Bomb Group "Sleepy Time Gal". It's a beauty.

Facing it is an olive drab C-47 with black and white "invasion stripes" on the fuselage and wings. The C-47 is a military version of the Douglas



Douglas C-54M Skymaster



C-124A Globemaster II



Restored over a seven year period - "Sleepy Time Gal"

B-17 Flying Fortress



Douglas C-47

DC-3 airliner, that first flew on December 17, 1935. The first C-47 flew on December 23, 1941, and 10,174 were built. Some DC-3's/C-47's are, amazingly, still in service today, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere.

The AMC museum C-47A Skytrain, Serial Number 42-92841, was rejected by other museums as "beyond salvage". It has been restored as the World War II 61st Troop Carrier Squadron "Turf & Sport Special". On D-Day, June 6, 1944, it delivered 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers to St. Mère-Église.

This was a great visit, and I was sooooo glad we finally stopped in, and paid homage to the Air Mobility Command. If you're an airplane nut and are ever down that way, pull over: you'll be glad you did.



B-17 Flying Fortress. Restored as "Sleepy Time Gal"

The Air Mobility Command Museum in Dover, Delaware is dedicated to military airlift and air refueling aircraft and the men and women who flew and maintained them. It has the largest and most complete collection of fully restored U.S. military cargo and tanker aircraft in the Eastern United States.



The Rolls Royce Merlin V-1650 P-51 Mustang engine.

