

## ANOTHER ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME 2016

Ever since I saw the Mel Gibson movie Forever Young, where he and a boy fly a B-25, I have wanted to fly one. I searched through the Internet any number of times, and drew a blank. Recently, I found a website for the American Aeronautical Foundation, and they had a B-25! Not only that, but they were based at an airport near me.

I wasted no time contacting them, and I got a call back confirming my flight!



I had to check in an hour before the flight to take care of paperwork and a preflight briefing. While we were waiting our turn, we watched the plane taxi to the runway. On Saturday, this airport is rather busy with training and people flying into the Waypoint Café, so it took some time before the plane took off. It finally did, but shortly after it took off; an experimental aircraft declared an emergency and landed the opposite way on the runway. Unfortunately, the nose gear collapsed and the plane ran off the runway.

This closed the airport until the runway could be cleared.



Fortunately, there was another airport close by, and the B-25 landed there. We were driven over to the other airport so we could board the plane, as well as pick up the passengers that had been on the previous flight.

I boarded the plane, and we took off and flew back to Camarillo Airport, the plane's home base. The operator told us we would get a complete flight at a later date. When I got home, I told Kathy about the entire experience, and she was shocked that I had not been able to fly the plane. From some previous conversations, she thought I had paid \$2500 for the ride! I explained to her that it was a much smaller amount, but I could get an hour of instruction flying the plane for \$2500. Kathy, bless her heart, said if it is on your bucket list, go for it!

I called the operator, and told them that I wanted to get that instruction and was willing to pay the \$2500 (gulp). I figure you only go around once, so why not?

I was checking the B-25 schedule, and saw the plane would be back at Camarillo in the middle of April. When the time gets closer, I will find out if I am going to fly or just ride the B-25,



Unfortunately, on a one day schedule, they had some cancellations, so I was not able to fly with them. In checking their calendar, I saw that they will be back in August for the Air Show in Camarillo. I contacted them and told them I would be there.

In the meantime, my son sent me an e-mail about another B-25 being available for rides in May, so I called and booked the flight, and also booked a spot for my copilot, Jim. He has been a tremendous help for me flying the Angel Flight missions, as well as the few Pilots & Paws missions we have flown. I believe he thinks we are just going to look at the plane, not fly in it. Boy is he going to be surprised!



I picked him up and we drove to Camarillo Airport to finish the check in procedures. There were 4 WW2 planes there, a B-17, a B-24, a B-25, and a P-51.



We were supposed to take off at around one PM, but one of the passengers was up in the P-51 so we had to wait for him. We finally got airborne, and I called Kathy and my local airport to let them know we would be flying overhead.

I crawled back into the tail, and got some shots of South Mountain with the SP (for Santa Paula), that we see from our front porch in Santa Paula. I also got a shot of my airport.



Jim and I took pictures of each other holding one of the .50 caliber machine guns.



In talking with the pilot, he told me that if I became a member and Volunteer of American Aeronautical Foundation, I could sit in the copilot's seat and fly the B-25 the following day.

I arrived at the airport the next day, and they rolled my B-25 out of the hangar. We took off along with the B-17, B-25, the other B- 25 and the P-51.

The next stop for the planes was Santa Barbara, so both B-25's and the P-51 joined up near Ventura. I climbed into the top turret and took a picture looking back towards the tail, then of the P-51, the B-25, and after they joined up.



It did cause quite a stir at Santa Barbara Airport when the 2 B-25's landed! The P-51 and the other B-25 taxied to the ramp for display, and we taxied back to the runway for takeoff.

We flew back down the coast, from Santa Barbara towards my home airport of Santa Paula, and I changed seats with the copilot to actually fly the plane! It was much heavier on the controls, and had a lot more inertia than the small planes I was used to flying.

I was told to hold the airspeed at 150 knots, which was 50 knots faster than I usually fly! I also did some gentle turns, with no more than 30 degrees of bank to get the feel of the plane.

I flew past our home, but unfortunately we were at the back of the house so my wife did not see me. However, she saw us fly over the previous day. Unfortunately, all good things come to an end, and as we neared the airport, I helped with the prelanding checklist, and then relinquished my copilot's seat. In summary, the only thing better than flying in a B-25 once is flying in one twice! I smiled all the way home, as another wish had been fulfilled.

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