

Carl Scholl of Aero Trader reviews the restoration of “Betty's Dream”

The plane came to us from its most recent job as a fire fighting tanker based in Alberta Canada. Basically, it was a well-worn tanker, had the normal mods to install slurry tanks, many sheet metal repairs from previous mishaps and of course all the original WWII military installed equipment was long gone. It was never used by the USAF post war as a trainer and thus was never converted into the N model.

The restoration started out as a repair as necessary and make safe and airworthy. That changed into make it WWII authentic. The fun begins. We had previous experience building two other B-25s in their original configuration. One was Cavanaugh Flight Museum's "How 'Boot That" and Kermit Weeks "Apache Princess". The 8-gun nose configuration was a different challenge, but we had the parts in our vast stock of Mitchell spares and collection.

We spent about 40,000-man hours doing the restoration plus the cost of materials and various outside services. The scope of the work was as follows and not necessarily in the order shown here:

Basic disassembly and removal of engines, props, landing gear, hydraulic components, electrical wiring, instruments, all furnishings such as seats, controls, windows (glass and plexiglass).

Clean and paint strip interior and exterior. Paint interior and exterior (after flight testing)

Locate all armament related parts: turret, replica 50 cal guns, tail turret, gun nose parts, mounts, armor plate, ammo boxes and cans. Restore same. Turrets operational.

Locate and recondition all original radio components, mounts and racks.

Rebuild and install original armor plated pilot seats. (Called coffin seats as the armor came clear up the back of the pilot's heads)

Engine and prop overhaul, hyd parts OH and tested and installed. Hydraulic tubing replaced. Landing gear OH.

Complete electrical rewiring, install avionics.

Recondition entire cockpit, controls, markings per original.

Install all original furnishings throughout.

Install all bomb racks, release mechanisms, wiring, bore sighting equipment. Function test.

We have (4) B-25J projects in our inventory. All are partially disassembled, but we have never done an evaluation to determine what structural repairs may be needed. We have all the components necessary to do complete restorations regardless of the model desired.

Based on current shop rates, cost of doing business, condition of whatever airframe was brought to us for restoration, I feel certain the cost to replace Betty's Dream would be in the \$6,000,000 range and 3-5 years depending on the budget available from the client. More men, less time.