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## B-17 bomber coming to DeKalb airport

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AUBURN — People will have the chance to experience history through the eyes of a bomber pilot when a World War II bomber flies into Auburn today.

The Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force will navigate its B-17 Flying Fortress "Sentimental Journey" into the DeKalb County Airport around noon today as part of an education tour the group takes each summer throughout the United States. People may tour the bomber or take flights today, Saturday and Sunday.

"It's a way for people who have never seen these aircraft fly — just the power these aircraft have — and be able to see the engines start up, it brings history to life," said Rick Senffner spokesman for the Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force. "It's not like a picture book. People will get to see these aircraft working and flying. It's like history come to life."

B-17s now are rare pieces of World War II history — about 10 bombers (in flying condition) of the 12,731 planes produced are thought to be in existence today. Most bombers were scrapped for metal after the war, Senffner explained.

The B-17 was designed by Boeing in 1937 after the U.S. Army Air Corps called for a plane with the ability to carry out long-range bombing missions. A reporter coined the term "Flying Fortress" for the bomber, due to its wingspan, size and aluminum exterior.

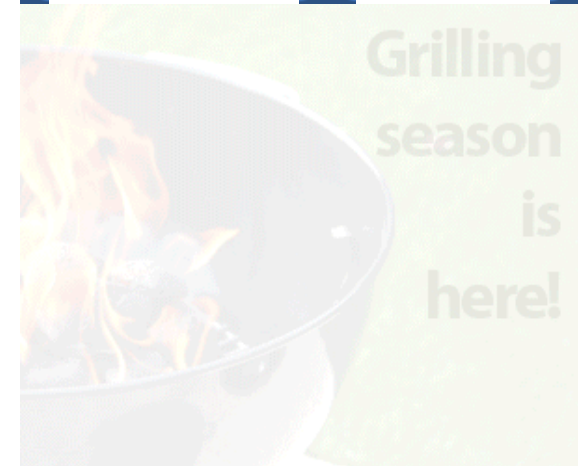
The Sentimental Journey's wings span over 100 feet and it weighs 65,000 pounds. It was built in Long Beach, Calif., in 1944 and served in the Pacific Theater.

Senffner said many women helped to build B-17s while men were

### Images



The B-17 Flying Fortress "Sentimental Journey" will spend the weekend at DeKalb County Airport, offering rides and tours. PHOTO CONTRIBUTED



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serving overseas. Women Auxiliary Service Pilots (WASPs) flew the planes from factories to their jumping-off points.

"It was just a monumental teamwork from all of society to help to make these aircraft and send them overseas," Senffner said.

During wartime, more guns were added to the aircraft. The plane wasn't pressurized or heated when it flew in World War II. Temperatures could get down to 60 below zero, Senffner said.

In 1943, an Army Air corpsman had a one in three chance of completing his assigned 25 missions, Senffner explained.

Senffner's uncle preserves the B-17's history to help keep alive the memory of his uncle, Steve Domladovac.

"His whole crew was killed on a B-17 mission in 1943. Growing up, (my family) had his picture on the old Victrola radio. When you're a kid and see someone in uniform, you think they're pretty important. ... (This is a way) I'm able to help keep the history flying and the memory of my uncle alive," Senffner said.

More than 26,000 fliers were killed while on B-17 missions during the war.

"We're flying to keep our history alive and to thank that generation," Senffner said.

Thousands of man-hours go into keeping the plane maintained.

"Costs are extremely prohibitive. We keep the maintenance on the plane just as any regular airliner. We're as strict as any airliner would be," Senffner said.

Anyone who is interested in taking a flight should call (602) 448-9415. Flights of 45 minutes will cost \$425 per person for the waist section and \$600 per person in the nose section.

Ground tours of the plane will cost \$5 for ages 13 to adult and \$3 for children ages 5-12. Children under 5 will be admitted free.

For more information, visit [azcaf.org](http://azcaf.org).

Display dates and times are today from a noon arrival until 6 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with a morning departure Monday.

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