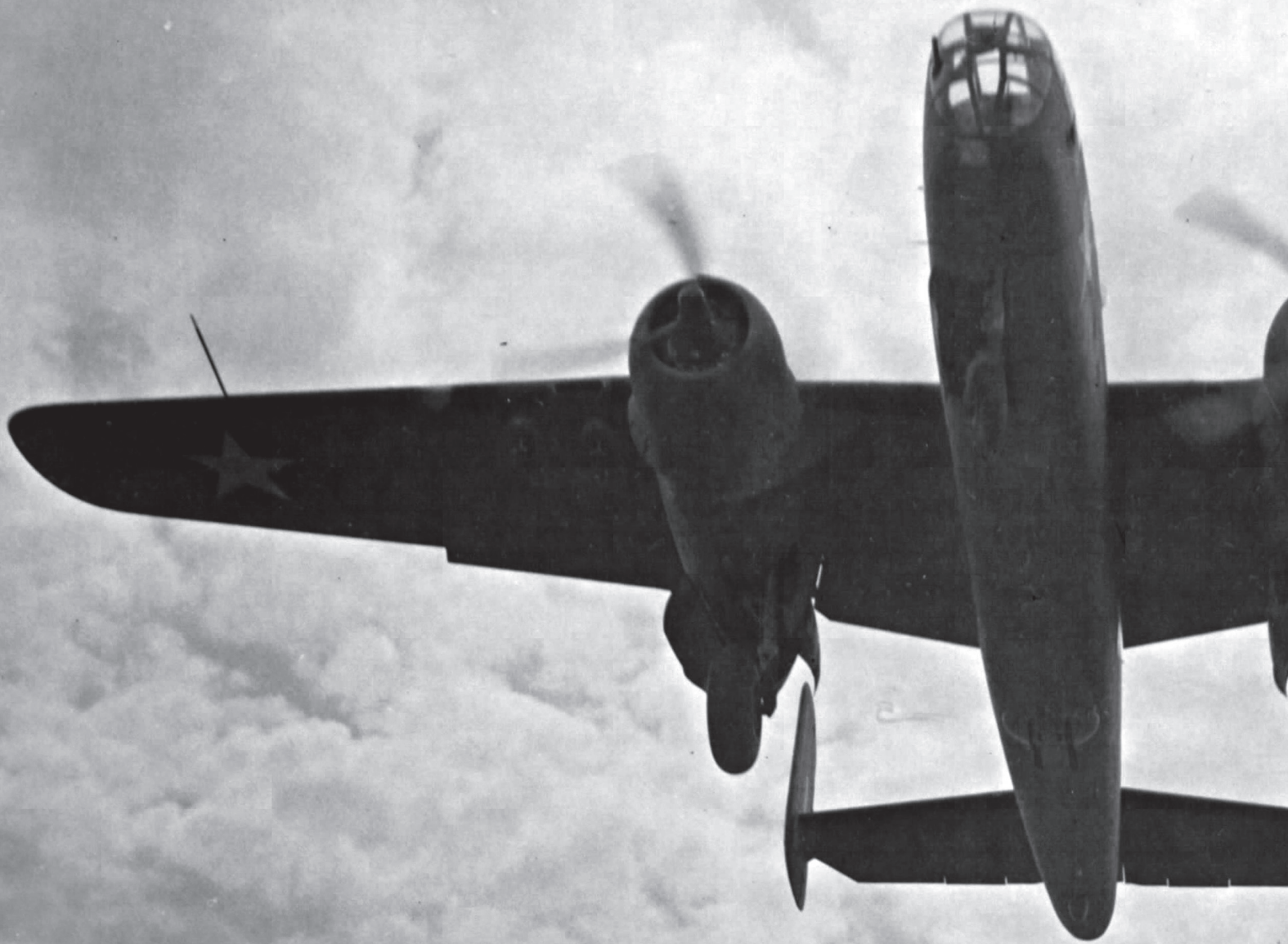


Mitchell Masterpieces

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF PAINT JOBS ON B-25s IN U.S. SERVICE





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AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF PAINT JOBS ON B-25s IN U.S. SERVICE

WIM NIJENHUIS

Violaero



"Nyack" and "Old Crow", two examples of nose art on camouflaged B-25s in the Pacific Ocean Area. (USAF)



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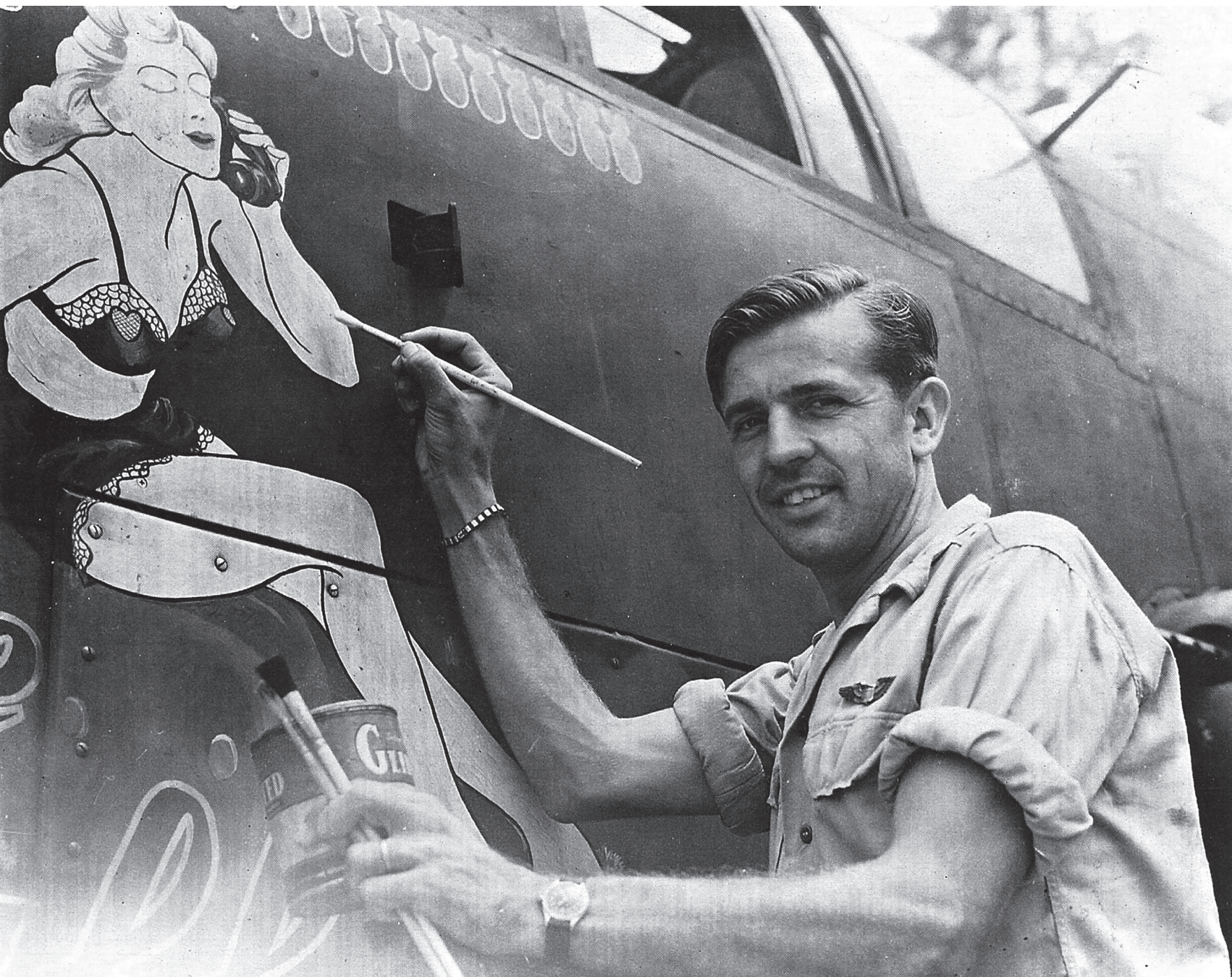
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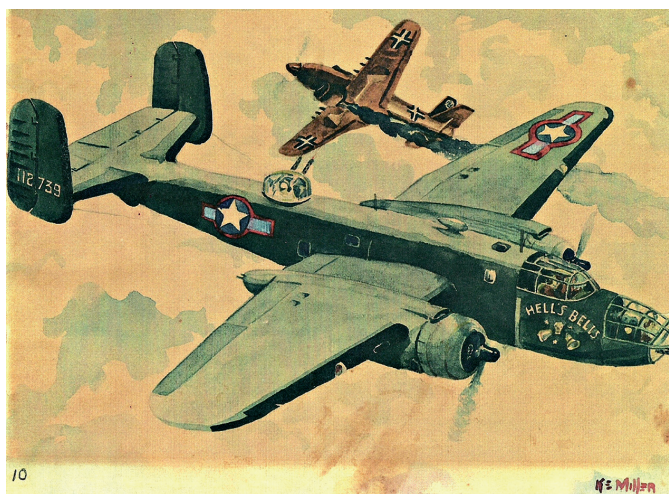
Lt. Col. Kenneth E. Miller at work on a B-25. He painted the nose art on several B-25s of the 42nd BG and others. Miller (1917-2010) was a pilot with the 100th BS, 42nd BG, and a talented artist. At right, a colour print of an original sketch work of Kenneth Miller. (Kenneth E. Miller via John C. Miller)

FOREWORD

By John Creighton Miller
Sherman, Texas.

My father was an excellent artist who during the war used his talent to paint nose art. Nose art is paintings on the nose of aircraft in combat. He was responsible for most of the nose art on the fuselages of the B-25s flying in the South Pacific during the last years of World War Two, especially with the 42nd Bomb Group.

One of the popular examples is "Powerhouse". The story of Theophilis Wright, Pacific Theatre early 1940s. Lt. Wright was resting in his tent when several crewmen came running in shouting that "Tokyo Rose", the propagandist, was broadcasting a challenge that the pilot and crew of a U.S. B-25 with a picture of a bulldog desecrating the Japanese flag had been seen in the islands of the South Pacific. The Japanese said that the entire crew was marked for death. Wright, an aggressive combat pilot said: "Tell them where to find me. I'm sick of chasing them all over the damn Pacific." About forty years later, retired Lt. Col. Ken Miller received a letter from Lt. Wright's grandson wanting to find any information he could about his grandfather. Dad, Lt. Col. Miller, provided



him with the story about "Powerhouse", "Tokyo Rose" and a handwritten letter at the time for which he was very appreciative. Lt. Wright survived the duration of the war and some years more. The original painting is housed in the Commemorative Air Force "Air Power Museum" located on the grounds of the Midland Airport in Midland, Texas.

My father flew the B-25. The most famous action by B-25 bombers was led by Col. Jimmy Doolittle, who led an attack on Japan itself, which felt safe and secure from American attack. The U.S. Navy refitted an older carrier, the USS *Hornet*, and went all

the way to Japan with extra fuel and a longer than normal take off deck. Most of the B-25 bomber pilots realized that the deck was too small to land on with a B-25 and didn't expect to come back.

Thank you for asking me to write the foreword in this great book about paintings on U.S. B-25 bombers. My father was such an inspiration to me and all my sisters and brother.



"WEEZIE"



33882

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.

Many thanks goes to John C. Miller. He is son of Lt. Col. Kenneth E. Miller, pilot in the 42nd Bomb Group and a very talented artist. He made many beautiful paintings on the noses of B-25s. John wrote the foreword and has provided me with sketches made by his father and several great photos of stunning nose art of his hand on various B-25s.

A special thanks goes to the following individuals (in alphabetical order) who have helped me in providing information, feedback, photographs or were willing to give permission for the use of photo material:

- ★ Barbara Ennis Connolly (historian 57th Bomb Wing, daughter of Edward C. Ennis, 321st BG)
- ★ Bob Dorough (son of Jim Dorough, 41st BG, 48th BS)
- ★ Darrin Miller (grandson of Art Sanislo, 41st BG, 396th BS)
- ★ Dave Charville (grandson of Leighton D. Charville, 321st BG, 445th BS)
- ★ Don Kaiser (son of Quentin C. Kaiser, 340th BG, 489th BS)
- ★ Douglas Cook (son of Charles Cook, 340th BG, 487th BS)
- ★ Mike Laney (historian 57th Bomb Wing, grandson of William P. Laney, 340th BG, 486th BS)
- ★ Mark Aldrich (San Diego Air and Space Museum)
- ★ Vic Tatelman and Lyn Moore (former B-25 pilot, 345th BG, 499th BS)

I also want to thank Rob van Oosterzee, for his great and conscientious help with the linguistic issues of the manuscript, for his help in researching used camouflage paint and for providing some very useful suggestions.

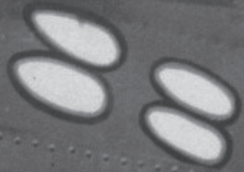
Finally, I would also like to thank the following individuals or organisations (in alphabetical order) who have helped me, in the past or recently, for their time and effort for providing information or pictures that could be used in this book.

- | | |
|---|--|
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| ★ Neil Aird | http://www.dhc-2.com/ |
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The Magnificent Medium" |
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| ★ Steven R. Whitby | |
| ★ U.S. Air Force | |
| ★ U.S. Marine Corps | |
| ★ U.S. National Archives and Records Administration | |

Photo courtesy: Where known, the photos are listed with their sources.



"MY BABY IIII"
BIG RATZ LEIBY LITTLE RATZ



INTRODUCTION

This is a book about paint jobs on the North American B-25 Mitchell in service of the United States armed forces. The B-25 was the most widely used allied medium bomber of the Second World War. The B-25 has always had my special interest and since I was a young boy, I have collected many photographs and much information about this airplane.

The B-25 was a successful product of the North American Aviation company. In the period from 1941 until 1945, a total of 9.889 B-25 airplanes were produced in two factories, one at Inglewood, California, and one in Kansas City, Kansas. Under the inspiring leadership of James Howard "Dutch" Kindelberger, the company grew from a small factory into one of the leading aviation and space consortiums in the world. The development of the factories and the production of the B-25 bombers are extensively described and illustrated in my previous book "B-25 Factory Times".

After the produced airplanes left the factories, they served in the armed forces of the United States as well as other allied countries during and after the war. The B-25s accepted by the Army Air Forces were mainly used by the U.S. Army Air Forces and the U.S. Navy. In addition, many airplanes were supplied to other countries in small or large numbers. The B-25 was used all over the world and was fighting on almost every theatre of war. It was not only used in the classic bomber role, but also as an attack airplane, a transport plane, trainer, reconnaissance and photographic airplane and even for maritime operations and many more. After the war, it was still in military service and used for post war military roles, mainly in the United States. Also other countries used the B-25 after the war, whether or not in military conflicts. Some countries then just started using the B-25 in their air forces. Especially Canada, the Netherlands and many Latin American countries used the B-25 after the war. At the same time, the B-25 also began to reach the civilian market. Many B-25s were modified and used by civil companies for different purposes. They flew

as transport planes, trainers, fire-fighters, camera ships for movies and even acted as movie stars themselves. Fortunately, nowadays there are still a relatively large number of B-25s on display in a number of museums and even in airworthy condition.

Many good books have been published with extensive, detailed information and photos about the role of the B-25 in service during World War Two. But an overview of the various paintings on the B-25s that have flown in different units all over the world has never been published. This book focuses on the B-25s used in U.S. service. The airplanes were mostly painted in standard camouflage colours in the factories, whether or not suited for the particular operational area where they were employed. Afterwards, in the field often operational and/or personal markings were applied. In the Second World War, primarily nose art was very popular. The idea had something to do with a confidence in the safe return from a mission. While many nations decorated their airplanes with nose art, United States Air Force pilots were

unique in their penchant for painting pretty girls on the sides of their planes. These girls became their guardians, the promise of a safe return. Sometimes they would forget to paint the clothes on them, which would often be hastily added before the plane returned home from the front lines. Eventually, the Air Force passed a regulation encouraging a sense of decorum, but boys will be boys and pretty girls still got painted on airplanes. However, it was not only girls. Stars from the Hollywood movie industry and many cartoon characters dominated the noses of bombers. And of course, there were the many personal or unit markings. These were not just painted on the nose, but also on other parts of the airplane. On the B-25, the large vertical twin tails were also popular parts. The Second World War turned nose art into a major industry. It was to become the golden age of airplane nose art and resulted in many masterpieces. There was room for any artist who could paint an enticing girl or a stunning figure. But also later in the war and after the war, the shiny aluminium airplanes with their markings were masterpieces to watch. A lot has been published about airplane nose art, but not entirely focused on the B-25. With this book I hope to fill this gap

and it's not just about nose art, but it also focuses on other paintings and their background thoughts. In this book, the bombardment group and squadron information is in particular limited to what is related to the use of the B-25 bomber in the U.S. armed forces during the war. A brief history of the units is given. And, of course, it is not complete. It is simply impossible to describe in one book the B-25s used in all units. So a choice has been made and the most relevant units have been selected. And as to the individual airplanes, many examples are shown. These include miscellaneous photos that are less known or even completely unknown. But it is impossible to describe each of the many, many individual B-25s and in addition, much of the necessary historical information is missing. The presence of cameras on wartime bases was actively discouraged so in many cases, art was painted on an airplane and the airplane was lost before even an "unofficial" photograph could be taken. In other cases only poor quality, distant shots of an artwork adorned bomber were taken. And don't forget, at the war's end, people were happy that the war was over. There was little interest and thousands of airplanes were scrapped with little note being taken of any artwork.

That is why a book like this is in place to honour the many brave crews, who for their own safe return, provided the B-25s with the most beautiful paintings. Enjoy the colours of the Mitchell Masterpieces.

Wim Nijenhuis

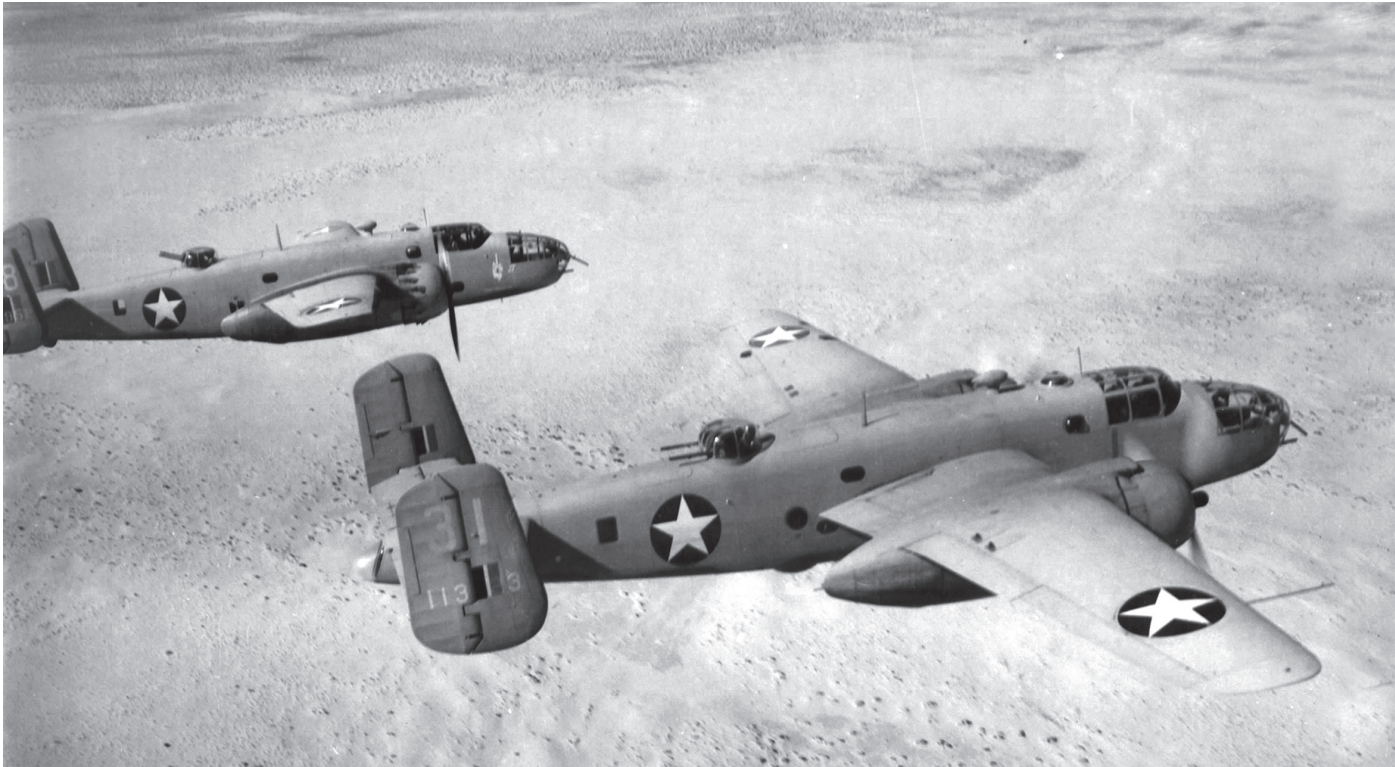
Abbreviations

ACG	Air Commando Group
AF	Air Force
ANG	Air National Guard
BG	Bombardment Group
BS	Bombardment Squadron
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RG	Reconnaissance Group
USAAC	United States Army Air Corps (from 2 July, 1926 to 20 June, 1941)
USAAF	United States Army Air Forces (from 20 June, 1941 to 17 September, 1947)
USAF	United States Air Force (from 18 September, 1947)



This picture symbolises very well the function of nose art. Nose art was a morale booster. The main purpose was especially to inspire the crews in the faith of returning home safely. Putting paintings on airplanes, mostly on the fuselage nose, helped them mentally to do so. This airplane of the 310th Bomb Group in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations shows very clearly the message. (via Mike Laney)

CAMOUFLAGE AND (NOSE) ART



Airplanes are camouflaged with colours that match the predominant colours of the surrounding environment, like these sand coloured B-25s over the Mediterranean desert. (USAF)

Camouflage has always played a crucial role in military operations. Camouflage is used to hide soldiers and equipment from the enemy. People have been using camouflage in some form from the beginning of human civilization. Camouflage material is coloured with dull hues that match the predominant colours of the surrounding environment. In jungle warfare, camouflage is typically green and brown, to match the forest foliage and dirt. In the desert, military forces use a range of tan colours. Camouflage for snowy climates is coloured with white and grey. Camouflage material may have a single colour, or it may have several similarly coloured patches mixed together. So, camouflage material helps soldiers

blend in with their environment so the enemy will not detect them. Nevertheless, it is not the soldiers alone. After the invention of the airplane, the opposing forces in World War One have used airplanes to seek each other out from the air. It became necessary to paint the airplanes with camouflage colours. With the rising of technical means and the capabilities of aircraft, the need of camouflage became more important. In World War Two, almost all military equipment of the fighting forces was coloured. The owners and operators of the air forces of the world have developed a wide variety of ways to hide the shiny airplanes from those who would shoot them down. The camouflage and marking of airplanes has not only

saved countless lives, it has also developed into a matter of some debate, as most wartime pilots never really cared much what colour their plane was during wartime. So most crews really did not bother to keep good records of just what colour their plane was. In addition, we all perceive colour somewhat differently, and its fugitive hues are only further obscured by its tendency to change over time.

Apart from camouflage paint, the airplanes were also provided with numbers, national markings, identification symbols and sometimes artistic paintings. Airplanes on all sides of the conflict carried dramatically different markings, different camouflage

patterns as well as insignia on the sides of the airplanes and on the top and bottom of the wings. However, even with these markings, anti-aircraft gunners often failed to accurately identify friend from foe. Therefore, sometimes additional markings were needed. A good example was the use of invasion stripes. In 1944, for the invasion of Normandy, many Allied airplanes were equipped with black and white invasion stripes. The bands were painted around the fuselages and wings, consisting of three white and two black bands, wrapped around the rear of an airplane fuselage just in front of the tail and from front to back around both the upper and lower surfaces of the wings. There was a special Operation Memorandum of 18 April, 1944, to prescribe the distinctive markings that had to be applied to U.S. and British airplanes in order to make them easier identifiable as friendly by ground and naval forces and by other friendly aircraft during and after the Normandy landings. But in practice, the stripes were applied quickly, in a not very exact manner, to many thousands of airplanes taking part in the invasion. Because the United States had no B-25s stationed in England, the B-25s in the USAAF had no invasion stripes. Only British B-25s of the RAF carried invasion stripes during and after the invasion in Normandy.



Painting invasion stripes on a B-26 Marauder. A special Operation Memorandum prescribed the size and location of the black and white bands that had to be applied to the U.S. and British airplanes for the invasion of Normandy. In practice, however, the stripes were applied quickly, in a not very exact manner, as this guy does with a large brush. (Life Magazine)

The Italians and Germans are credited with initiating the tradition of painting insignia on airplanes. At the start of World War One, the first versions of colour to airplanes centered around national and squadron markings. Although wildly painted squadron insignia were common in World War One, true nose art did not occur until the Second World War. Artwork was typically painted on the nose of airplanes, and the term "nose art" was coined. Nose art is the genre of art

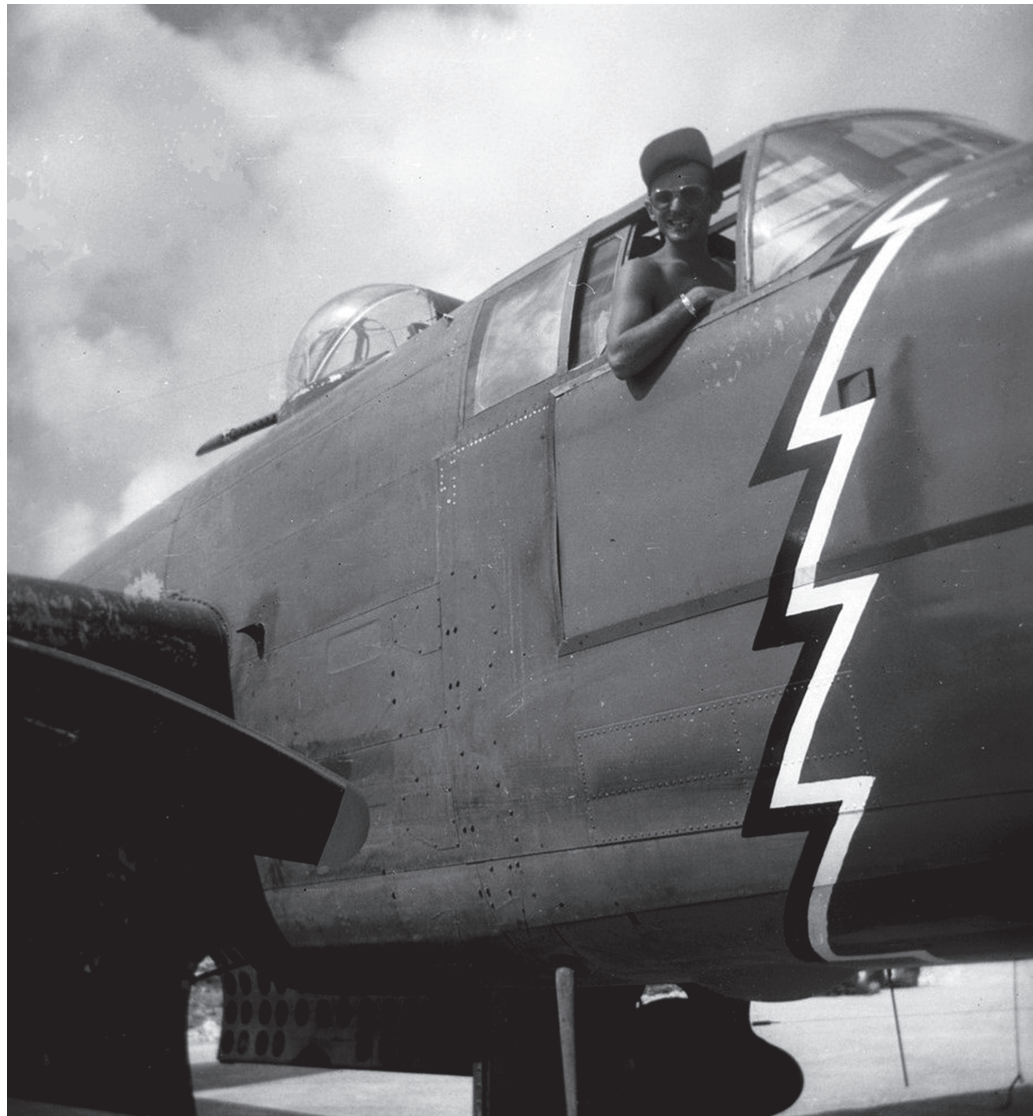
used to decorate combat airplanes. Since men used airplanes as an instrument of war, they have decorated them with this unique art form. Nose art also made the airplane easier to identify other than just simply using the serial number. It gave the airplane a personality, it became an entity. When you saw for example the B-17 "Madame Shoo Shoo" returning from a bombing run, you could immediately surmise what crew had made it back. Few crew members would talk about her serial 43-37707, but many tales would be told about the aircraft name. While many nations decorated their airplanes with nose art, American Air Force pilots were unique in their penchant for painting pretty girls on the sides of their airplanes. But also other items like animals, nicknames, hometowns, and popular song and movie titles adorned the airplanes.

Often shot down enemy planes were marked on the noses of Allied fighters with German swastikas or Japanese flags. On bombers, a bomb tally was added and this provided a powerful visual record of the success and longevity of the airplane. The bomber crews painted the images of bombs in front of the cockpit to represent completed missions. Targets destroyed or sunk were represented by silhouettes of trains, ships, etc., which were usually placed close to the mission markings. The number of bombing missions was important for medium and heavy bombers in the USAAF. A bomber crew completed a tour of duty and could go home after a certain number of missions if



Various crews put their aircraft name or nose art on their flying jacket. In this case, the crew of the B-25 "Bones" of the 82nd BS, 12th BG under the bomb bay of the airplane. The flight jacket with the name "Earthquakers" refers to the name of the 12th BG. Some artists of nose art were also very capable in painting crew jackets. (USAF)

Especially bombers were a popular palette for nose art due to their large area of relatively open "painting space" on the nose of their massive fuselages, like this ship of the 345th BG. (USAF)



they were not shot down. In some cases, additional information was noted like whether the operation was a day or a night raid, destruction of enemy fighters and sometimes other details of crews. Sometimes, the artwork on the airplane was even applied to the jackets of its crew. During World War II, the A-2 leather flight jacket was standard issue for flight crews, who often decorated them with squadron patches, rank marks, or elaborate artwork celebrating their plane, their girl, or whatever they liked.

Men at war separated from home, family, loved ones and a familiar way of life sought ways to personalize and escape the very harsh conditions surrounding them. Young men, who were generally under the age of twenty, could derive some comfort from images of women, mother, and home. Nose art was found on many types of fighters and

bombers. Especially bombers were a popular palette due to their large area of relatively open "painting space" on the nose of their massive fuselages. It looked like large canvases of 17th century masters. Nose art for the crew was a personalized reference to a piece of military hardware. Nose art was a morale booster, and those in daily combat needed that boost. Facing the prospect of death on every flight, the crew deserved all of the encouragement and smiles available to them. The art on the plane unified the crew and identified it, and made it unique among all the aircraft in their unit or at their base. They entrusted their lives to the airplane to get them back safely. They had to go through enemy territory. Nose art brought the crew together. It gave a signature to their unit. By putting a girl on a plane, the crews felt they were protected on their way out to bomb and patrol. It inspired the crews and gave

them a sense of belonging to an organized team. The main purpose was especially to inspire the crews in the faith of a safe return. Inspiring crews with nose art was a common practice during the war as well as touring entertainers. Bob Hope, John Wayne, Jack Benny, Carole Landis, and many other touring entertainers went across the seas to liven up the boys. Movies glorified the exotic South Pacific, using American beauties in what was considered more savage nations. The efforts from all sides of American society to support the war were endorsed through the art of pin-up. Boys across the sea were reminded of their American sweethearts waiting for them at home, and these images boosted morale for the troops. The airplane nose art of the 1940s can be differentiated in five categories: pin-ups, Hollywood stars, Disney, comic strips and a kind of "free style".

Pin-ups

Pin-ups represented a dominant theme on the noses of WWII bombers and fighters. The term pin-ups comes basically from the idea that women are beautiful models that are to be pinned up on the walls. Posters and images of these dolls were often found on the lockers and in the bedrooms of the soldiers who were at war, uplifting the spirits of the men who were fighting away from home, therefore away from families, friends and any intimate relationships. Pin-up women also gained popularity in the advertising world, as marketers discovered that beautiful women make everything more appealing.

Artists needed "inspiration" to envision their paintings. So, beautiful, often voluptuous female models were hired to pose for the artist. In many cases photographers were also hired to produce poses for the artist to use as references. There was no shortage of these models, as the pay was good and hopes of being discovered as a starlet was in every girl's mind. But pin-up models were also well known glamour models, actresses



The difference in the freedom of nose art between the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations and the Pacific area. "Shady Lady" still has some clothes on, "Honey" is totally nude. The farther from home, the freer the pin-ups were on the aircraft.

(SDASM, Collection Wim Nijenhuis)



Jane Russell



A publicity shot of artist Zoë Mozert painting Jane Russell. It became the movie poster rendition of Jane Russell in the 1943 movie "The Outlaw". The poster was superb and a classic of the genre and one of Mozert's most famous works. Zoë Mozert (1907-1993) was one of the top three female American pin-up illustrators. (Howard Hughes Productions)



29 December, 1947, advertising for the movie "The Outlaw" on the facade of the Amsterdam Cinema Royal.

(Ben van Meerendonk/AHF, collection IISG)

and fashion models and some of them became even icons. Pin-up art became so ingrained in GI life that band leader (and Army Air Force major) Glenn Miller added the song "Peggy the Pin-Up Girl" to his repertoire.

The pin-ups on airplanes were often made on the basis of examples of the real pin-up painters. A handful of American artists would lift the pin-ups to their greatest heights. Among those were Alberto Vargas, George Petty, Rolf Armstrong, Zoë Mozert, Earl Moran and the famous Gil Elvgren. But nose art artists also painted very often a "fantasy girl" pin-up art on the military aircraft. Although the military never officially sanctioned nose art, it unofficially approved it as a morale-booster. It was a survival technique in a harsh environment. The Navy and Marines commonly held to a restrictive approach to aircraft markings, but the Army Air Forces allowed room for freedom of expression.

The Army Air Forces Regulation 35-22 of August 1944 authorized decorating any air force equipment with individual designs and encouraged it as a means of increasing



Below, similar nose art on a post-war B-29 Superfortress, s/n 42-65306, of the 28th BS, 19th BG in Korea.

(USAF)



Cover of the "Esquire" magazine of August 1940, the month the first B-25, s/n 40-2165, made its maiden flight with test pilot Vance Breese at the controls. Top, Alberto Vargas' first fantasy pin-up appeared as a gatefold in the October 1940 issue. Vargas must have been aware that he was following in the wake of George Petty, whose "Petty Girls" had already achieved notoriety in the pages of "Esquire". George Petty was another famous American pin-up artist. His pin-up art appeared primarily in "Esquire". Vargas' use of a telephone in this composition is probably a nod to Petty, who often used telephones as props.

(Collection Wim Nijenhuis, Esquire)

morale. The farther from headquarters, and the farther from the public eye, the freer the art. For instance, aircraft based in the South Pacific were more likely to have nudity than those in England.

Particularly popular were the pin-ups from the men's magazine "Esquire". Crews of the USAAF painted girls on the nose sections of fighters and bombers. The most duplicated nose art images were the products of Esquire's artists George Petty and Alberto Vargas. Like other magazines, "Esquire" published stories and articles on the United States' fighting forces abroad and civilian activities at the home front. Esquire's motives were not solely patriotic. "Esquire" was, after all, in the fashion business. "Esquire" was founded in 1933 as a men's apparel trade magazine with exclusive distribution through haberdashery stores.

By the 1940s, the magazine had widened its focus and increased in popularity, largely due to the famous Varga Girl illustrations. Alberto Vargas (1896-1982) was born in Peru as the son of a renowned photographer. He moved to the United States in 1916 after studying art in Europe in Zurich and Geneva prior to World War I. He never received formal training as a painter. He learned the airbrush techniques that later

made his work famous by retouching photos in his father's studio in Peru. He taught himself to use media such as pen and ink, watercolours, oils and pastels. Vargas's skill with watercolour emerged in his freelance work. He concentrated on painting women, using watercolours and airbrush to create a smooth effect. His paintings attracted the attention of Florenz Ziegfeld, who hired Vargas in 1919 as the official portrait painter of the Ziegfeld Follies. This was a series of elaborate theatrical productions on Broad-

way in New York during the 1930s. Vargas worked for every major studio. He painted portraits of the major female stars of the period, including Shirley Temple, Marlene Dietrich, Barbara Stanwyck, Greta Garbo and Hedy Lamarr.

In June 1940, "Esquire" hired Vargas as an illustrator to replace George Petty. He agreed to drop the "s" from Vargas because of the thought "Varga" sounded more euphonious. So, the "Varga Girl" was born, and Var-



A picture of Alberto Vargas taken on 30 April, 1946, showing one of his Varga Girl drawings which adorns the wall of the U.S. District Court. Vargas took "Esquire" to court in 1946 in an effort to get out from under the contract and retain the use of the "Varga Girl" name. At right is his wife Anna Mae Clift, a former showgirl with the Greenwich Village Follies. Born in Peru, Alberto Vargas y Chávez created an art style of magnificent paintings that spanned six decades. Most recognized for "Esquire". The style of Vargas is instantly recognizable, relying on a combination of airbrush and watercolours depicting women in poses and stances that he termed as a glorification of the American girl.

(AP Photo)

A set of the famous and popular pin-up cards published by Brown & Bigelow circa 1953 and labeled "53 Vargas Girls." The set has 52 cards plus 2 Jokers, one of which is a biography of Vargas. All cards except the Joker with the Vargas biography have original Vargas illustrations, so there are "53 Vargas Girls." The cards measure 90mm x 63mm.

(Collection Wim Nijenhuis)