

Proposed article for the CSM Monthly newsletter:

### The Collings Foundation “Wings of Freedom Tour”

The Collings Foundation “Wings of Freedom Tour” visited the Dayton – Wright Brothers Airport August 9 through 11. The “Wings of Freedom Tour” comprises four restored, flying WWII aircraft. The tour visits 100 to 110 airports each year. This year’s tour included the B-17G “Nine-O-Nine”, a Douglas built aircraft serial number 44-83575. The aircraft was too late to see combat use but served in air-sea rescue and MATS roles until retirement. It has been restored to wartime ETO combat configuration.



I was able to go through the aircraft, an athletic exercise. I gained a new appreciation for the men who flew and fought in these planes.

Also on the tour was a B-24J painted as the aircraft “Witchcraft” that flew with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Europe. This airplane was actually serial number 44-44052 built by Consolidated Fort Worth. It was transferred to Britain and operated by the RAF in the China-India-Burma theater. Post war it was used by the new Indian Air Force for over a decade. It was “rescued” from India by a British collector and later resold to the Collings Foundation. I got to see this airplane take-off and land. We were behind the plane as it started to taxi out and got the full impact of the prop thrust!



In a quirk of digital photography, the props appear to be stopped in the photo but were actually at idle speed during a pre-flight warm-up and engine check.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> aircraft on the tour was a glass-nose B-25J painted as “Tondelayo”. Sorry, I don’t have any detailed history on this one though it must have been used for training post-war as it has a modified collector ring exhaust system to lower the notoriously high noise level of the WWII exhaust configuration. Note the plane has no dorsal turret. The real “Tondelayo” was a B-25D operating in the Southwest Pacific. I had previously seen this plane at the Doolittle Raid 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration in 2012.



The 4<sup>th</sup> and last aircraft on the tour was a TF-51D (TP-51D) named "Toulouse Nuts". It is one of three remaining factory built two-seat trainer versions of the Mustang. I had thought the two-seaters were all post-war warbird collector modifications but, as usual, I was wrong. According to "The American Fighter" reference book there were eleven trainer versions built. The Collings Foundation plane is painted as it was in real life, in the West Virginia ANG 167<sup>th</sup> FS. This plane was the 2016 Oshkosh AirVenture Grand Champion. You can take a 30 minute ride in her for a mere \$2200. It is a popular ride as it flew four times while I was there.

