

# History on the tarmac: Wings of Freedom brings three planes to local airport

By RODD CAYTON The Daily News

Apr 12, 2018



Veterans Pat Moyer (foreground), Jim Robinson and Howard Foss admire a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress on Thursday at the Wings of Freedom Tour event at Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport. The plane bears the names of families who have made donations toward the costs of operating its flights.

RODD CAYTON/The Daily News

**BULLHEAD CITY** — History left the realm of books and movies Thursday and took up residence at Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport.

The airport is hosting three World War II-era aircraft as part of the Wings of Freedom Tour, brought to the area by the Collings Foundation.

Greg Tippings, of Fort Mohave, was most interested in the Consolidated B-24 Liberator. His father, Charles Tippings, was a radio operator on that model of plane when he was shot down in the Pacific in 1943.

"I'd never seen one in person," Greg Tippings said. "I wanted to see what he actually dealt with in his service, see inside one and learn more about it."

Pilot Capt. Dorwin Wilson lost three engines on a bombing run and had to put the B-24 down in shallow water atop a coral reef.

The crew all survived, and made it to a small island nearby.

"Wilson must have done a hell of a job that day," said Tippings, himself an Army veteran. "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for him."

Also on display were a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and a P-51 Mustang fighter.

Jack Robinson, of Fort Mohave, said he likes airplanes and studying the sacrifices made by those who fought in World War II. He said he was impressed by the B-17 and the missions it performed during the war.

Mike Tibbets, of Bullhead City, said he brought his grandson, Dexter Buffet, age 3, because local children don't get many opportunities to observe history.

Event coordinator Jamie Mitchell said Wings of Freedom was started as a way for World War II pilots to fly their old planes again, and has grown into a nonprofit educational foundation.

Mitchell said the organization hopes to inspire children to be interested in history and keep the war, which she called "possibly the most historically significant event in history," in the public's memory.

The Collings Foundation, she said, plans to open a museum in Massachusetts in October.

The event continues from 9 a.m. to noon today, then the tour heads for Henderson, Nev. Admission is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children younger than 12 for access to up-close viewing and tours through the inside of the aircraft.

Flights on the aircraft are also available. A 30-minute flight aboard the B-17 or B-24 is \$450. P-51 flight training is \$2,200 for a half-hour or \$3,200 for a full hour.

Mitchell said Wings of Freedom plans to come back to Laughlin/Bullhead International next year with six planes, as the organization celebrates its 30th anniversary.