

another mission, which I had to abort due to flak damage to two engines over France, I returned to base and made a routine landing with the bomb bay still loaded with 500-pound demolition bombs.

The Liberator's reliability was equal or superior to other combat aircraft.

Roy Carlton

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Coral Gables, Fla

I salute Mr. Grainger for telling it like it was in World War II for those condemned to fly in B-24s. His assessment of the plane is, if anything, too laudatory. My own B-24 experience began at Langley Field, Va., where the view from the air was less than heartening—the field dotted with scores of burn marks, each the size and shape of a B-24.

George Patrick

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Aurora, Colo

In World War II, we affectionately called the B-24 the "Flying Boxcar" or the crate the B-17 came in," but we loved it. Once we made an 18-hour bombing raid from India into Burma; the planes were outfitted so the pilot could release the bombs, and we dive bombed against enemy freight trains. We also ferried gasoline into China. Flying "the hump" from India into China was often exciting due to the altitudes we had to fly—thunderstorms like none seen in the U.S., icing conditions, and more often than not on instruments only. When Japan surrendered, we flew our B-24s back to Florida.

The B-24, God bless her, was one "helluva" plane for her time.

R P Lee

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Denver, CO

As a navigator, bombardier, radar observer, bombardment officer and instructor, I have flown in every aircraft the Army Air Corps had to offer in the war. Each was built to serve a specific need.

The B-17 carried a bigger payload

but was slower. The B-24 carried a smaller payload but was much faster. The B-25 and B-26 were shorter-range bombers. The A-26 was meant to be a "skip bomber."

By today's technology standards they were all junk. But, Mr. Grainger, who the hell won the war?

W.G. Johnson

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Houston, TX

As one of the chief industrial engineers at the Fort Worth plant producing the B-24 Liberator bomber, I must take exception to Mr. Grainger's letter. The innovative "Davis Wing" and every part and every assembly were carefully designed and manufactured to the highest specifications of the time, and resulted in what became the workhorse long-range bomber of the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.

This great plane saved the European bound ship convoys from submarine attacks in the 400 mile black hole of the Atlantic beyond the reach of any other air cover. Thousands of long-range B-24s, flown from bases in England and North Africa, did much to bring German industry to its knees. We might not have won the war in the Pacific without the capabilities of the long-range B-24. Many pilots will tell you a shot-up B-24 would continue to fly when all hope had been abandoned.

Harry S Crowder

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New York

Mr. Grainger omitted the affectionate nickname the B-29 personnel on Saipan had for the B-24 "The Ruptured Duck." No explanation is needed: Just watch one waddle down the runway.

Henry S Glazier

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Tampa, Fla.

I was also a B-24 pilot who began flying same in 1943 at age 21, flying 51 missions over Europe, then continuing as an instructor pilot through the war's end into 1946. I had no crew members hurt during

this period and cannot recall any gross or life threatening mechanical or design problems. On the contrary, it was a very forgiving airplane, which our group commander affectionately referred to as a "wonderful piece of machinery."

Wesley W. Rink

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Ocean Springs, MS

All WWII combat aircraft were dangerous, especially in the hands of young, inexperienced pilots and maintenance crews.

Slapped together? I guess so. After all, production rates ranged from one every four hours to one every 90 minutes, in slapped-together factories, by crews of newly trained, formerly jobless people from all walks of life. With battle-tested modifications being added during production and after, I don't think I ever got into two B-24s that were alike.

But in its time, and for its purpose, I think it was a great airplane and deserves to be preserved.

Clement R. Coggin

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Berlin, N.H.

Mr. Grainger unmistakably belittled the B-24 calling it the "Flying Prostitute" that nickname belonged to the Martin B-26 Marauder bomber, which under certain conditions was difficult to control; many crews were killed.

It's a good gesture General Dynamics is making in restoring a B-24. It will show future generations how things were.

Oliver R. Bell

