

I'LL TAKE

THE BOMBER

BY SCOTT PERDUE

For your next vacation, why not go in a B-25?

"Zeros, 10 o'clock high."

"Roger, Top Turret, keep an eye on 'em!
We're coming up to the IP."

"Boss, target is 30 seconds dead ahead! Keep it level at
500 feet and as fast as you can!"

"Zeros on our tail! They're shooting!"

"Steady, steady.... Ready, ready.... Bombs away! Okay,
we're off-target to the right. Bombardier, get that nose
gun on the Zeros ahead! Let's get outta here, guys!"

You've seen the war movies — intense crew, trained and ready, risking their lives to hit an enemy target, deep behind enemy lines — and you always wondered what it would be like to experience that firsthand. Do you have what it takes to muscle one of those big bombers around? Well, now you can find out for yourself. Thanks to a remarkable new opportunity from the caretakers of the famous Pacific Prowler, you can take the controls of a real B-25 and get FAA-approved training to learn to fly it. Even better, you can take your friends or family with you on a flying adventure across the Southwest at the same time.

The Pacific Prowler is a B-25 Mitchell, which entered service toward the tail end of World War II. You may have seen it in any number of Hollywood movies, including *Memphis Belle*, *Catch-22*, *Flight of the Phoenix*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *Around the World in 80 Days* and many others. A group of aviators in Texas keep the 65-year-old aviation star in top shape, and when the aircraft isn't on the airshow circuit, there's a seat for you up front. And if you'd like, most of your training can be on cross-country "missions," a unique opportunity to see the world and learn to fly a warbird at the same time.

If you're a pilot with a multi-engine certificate, you can get a B-25 type rating right on your license. Can you imagine? How many pilots





have a type rating in a B-25? Talk about bragging rights! The best part of training with the Pacific Prowler folks is that you don't even have to take a checkride. All you have to do is complete their

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training syllabus, and with a signed FAA Airman Certificate or Rating Application (the infamous 8710-1), a representative from the Flight Standards District Office will issue you a brand-new license with a B-25 type rating. It just doesn't get any easier — or more fun!

The Pacific Prowler is based at historic Meacham Field in Fort Worth, Texas. The airport still has the original hangar where American Airlines' C.R. Smith made his famous long-distance call to the Douglas Aircraft Company and first described an airplane the airlines wanted to have built. That airplane would become the DC-3.

Fort Worth itself has an amazing history, both in aviation and in popular culture. The town was founded before the Civil War and came into its own as a stop on the Chisholm Trail, earning the nickname “Cowtown.” The Fort Worth Stockyards are still there, where you can buy your own custom boots and Stetson hat, or take a ride on the Mechanical Bull at Billy Bob's, the World's Largest Honky Tonk.

When you do the course in Fort Worth, it's a three-day event. You travel on the first day and show up at the Vintage Flying Museum, the Prowler's home base, to take care of some administrative details and aircraft academics. Although your new rating is for Second-in-Command, all the flying is done in the left seat with the instructor in the right seat. All the maneuvers in the training syllabus were developed by a USAF Instructor Pilot, an F-4 and F-15E veteran who now flies for American Airlines.

You can fly the Prowler around Fort Worth for your training and



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turn your friends or family loose to take advantage of the many sites and sounds of a city that boasts, "Life is too short to live in Dallas!" For those interested in the fine arts, there's Bass Hall, a world-class theater for the performing arts. The Hall is located in vibrant downtown Sundance Square, a 14-block area with restored buildings, fine restaurants, bars, shopping and entertainment till the wee hours. For those interested in museums, the Fort Worth Museum District has an abundance of venues, from the Kimbell Art Museum, hosting works by Rembrandt, Picasso and Matisse, to the new Museum of Science and History, with its Omni IMAX Theater and well-equipped Noble Planetarium. Just a few miles away, you'll find one of the best zoos in the country, and its Log Cabin Village museum features an entire village straight from the 1880s.

Race fans can drive a few miles up I-35 to ride in a real stock car at the Texas Motor Speedway. To the east are Six Flags Over Texas, a haven for extreme roller coasters, and the homes of the Texas Rangers and the Dallas Cowboys. For those who like shopping, there are dozens of malls in Fort Worth, and in Dallas, the Galleria and the Miracle Mile beckon high-fashion bargain hunters. Aviation buffs have the beautiful collection at the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Addison, the CAF's chapter in nearby Lancaster, Bell Helicopter's headquarters in Fort Worth and Lockheed's Fighter Factory, where they build the F-16 and are gearing up for the F-35.

But the real adventures begin when you tell the Prowler team you

want your "sorties" to be cross countries. They'll set up a training sequence that allows you to taxi right to the active runway with the two 1,700-horsepower Wright engines rumbling through their straight stacks. Sitting in the left seat of the B-25, you'll pour on the coals, rotate

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and then be briefed on destinations as your "mission" progresses. You can't get any closer to being a WWII pilot than this!

The Prowler has something for everyone. For a twin-engine-rated pilot, you'll get the B-25 rating in just three days. If you're rated in a single-engine aircraft, the CFII on board allows you to log all the

multi-engine flight time. In fact, you don't even need to be a pilot to fly the airplane yourself. All you need to do is have the desire and show up. They have a program to put you in the left seat and you can fly yourself. For those who just want to ride in the bomber Doolittle made famous in his daring attack on Japan early in WWII, you can do that, too, by yourself or with six friends or family.

A recent program graduate, Butch Smith, a King Air pilot, reported, "I feel privileged to have flown the Pacific Prowler, a piece of history I've known about since I was a kid. I'm going to have a smile on my face for days!"

Where else can you fly a piece of history and carry around the souvenir right in your very own pocket? You should think about heading down to Cowtown, bring the family and line up for some of the best fun you can have legally.

See the Pacific Prowler and get more info at PacificProwler.org or by calling 877.IFLYB25. Arrivals: Fort Worth Meacham International Airport (FTW). 



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