



A volunteer with Doc's Friends prepares one of the B-29's four custom-built hybrid engines for mounting on the airframe. Doc originally belonged to a squadron nicknamed "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," all sporting nose art from the Disney story.

What's Up, Doc?

By Aaron M. U. Church, Associate Editor

With any luck, a restored World War II-era B-29 Superfortress—one of only two airworthy examples in the world—will take to the skies over its Wichita, Kan., birthplace this summer. The Boeing-built bomber, nicknamed *Doc*, survived more than 40 years on a target range in California's Mojave Desert before its rescue and eventual transport to Wichita in 2000.

"It was on a bombing range and it just happened to not get hit," said Tom Bertels, project spokesman, in an interview.

The aircraft's former owner, Tony Mazzolini, and a group of volunteers completed much of the restoration before funds got tight and local supporters formed the nonprofit group Doc's Friends to resuscitate the project in spring 2013.

"They really made significant progress, but it takes a lot of resources," explained

Bertels, who is also a member of the group's board. "There were some community leaders here in Wichita, ... and they decided that they really wanted to get this thing done."

Major components, including refurbished engines, propellers, fuel cells, and the undercarriage, have been purchased and paid for, and the team has "hung





Warbird Waypoints

★ **Dayton, Ohio**—The Air Force's first Bell Boeing CV-22 Osprey joined the National Museum of the US Air Force in Dayton in December. Visitors need to call ahead for a peek at the test Osprey, serial number 99-0021, on the museum's "Behind the Scenes Tour." Eventually, it will join the museum's Cold War Gallery in the museum's planned fourth building, slated to open to the public in 2016. www.nationalmuseum.af.mil

★ **Dover, Del.**—If you want to explore a Lockheed-built C-5 Galaxy, the Air Mobility Command Museum adjacent to Dover Air Force Base boasts the only one on display. The Tennessee Air National Guard retired this C-5A, serial number 69-0014, in August 2013. The museum's Galaxy made history drop-launching a Minuteman I intercontinental ballistic missile from its cargo bay in 1974. www.amcmuseum.org

★ **Hagerstown, Md.**—Volunteers were working to ferry one of the few airworthy C-123 Providers from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Hagerstown this spring. Fairchild Aircraft built the Vietnam War-veteran airframe, serial number 54-0681, in Hagerstown in 1956. The airplane spent many years flying civilian cargo before the Hagerstown Aviation Museum acquired it last year. Museum officials are raising funds to finish restoring it to its former Air Force glory. www.hagerstownaviationmuseum.org

★ **Honolulu**—The Royal Australian Air Force last September gave one of its retired General Dynamics F-111C Aardvarks to the Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor as a salute to the US-Australian alliance and a common experience flying the strike aircraft. Australia retired its F-111s in 2010. Pearl Harbor's Aardvark, serial number 67-0130, is the sole former RAAF F-111C on display outside of Australia. www.pacificaviationmuseum.org

★ **Seattle**—The Seattle Museum of Flight last October unveiled a historic remotely piloted aircraft: one of the Boeing-Insitu Group ScanEagles that the US Navy used to help rescue the captain of the merchant ship *Maersk Alabama* from Somali pirates in 2009. The harrowing incident inspired last year's film "Captain Phillips." It depicted the RPA, now hanging in the museum's main gallery, in action. www.museumofflight.org

We want to hear from you. If you visit one of these airplanes, snap a picture, and drop us a line at wingman@afa.org to let us know about the experience.

engines and started putting flight controls back on the airplane," said Bertels.

Doc's team consulted closely with the Commemorative Air Force, maintainers of *Fifi*, currently the lone flying Superfort.

"One of the high maintenance things on *Fifi* was the exhaust system," said Bertels. As a result, *Doc's* Friends contracted Experimental Aircraft Exhaust in Fargo, N.D., to design a new one for retrofit on both *Doc* and *Fifi*.

The engines themselves are actually a hybrid of engines used on the Vietnam War-era AC-119K Stinger gunship and the B-29's original Wright R-3350s, due

to the scarcity of the Wrights, as well as overheating problems with the early versions of the engine.

"The original aircraft was supercharged, but since we're going to be flying [*Doc*] down low, we're not doing that," said Bertels.

Unlike *Fifi*, *Doc* will fly in all-natural aluminum. "From the start, [those involved with the project] really wanted this to be finished like in the old days, but it's a heck of a process. ... It just blows you away. It's like a mirror," said Bertels.

Doc's Friends is working to involve the Wichita community in "adopting" the B-29, he said. Boeing leased the team's temporary hangar at McConnell AFB, Kan., and everyone, from retired veter-

ans to KC-135 maintainers on base, has volunteered. "One of the volunteers is a lady who was one of the original 'Rosie the Riveters'" at Boeing's Wichita plant, said Bertels.

The last major hurdle is fitting *Doc's* avionics.

"We'll be looking for a major sponsor for avionics next," said Bertels. The team aims to fly *Doc* to this year's Experimental Aircraft Association's fly-in at Oshkosh, Wis., that kicks off in late July, but Bertels admits this may be a stretch. He reckons *Doc* will take to the skies "late this summer."

Visit the *Doc's* Friends website for more information at www.b-29doc.com. ■