

COLORS OF WAR

DELVING INTO THE CHALLENGE HISTORIC ARCHIVES, WE PRESENT
A FURTHER SELECTION OF WORLD WAR TWO COLOR IMAGES
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Up for an acceptance test flight prior to delivery, Boeing B-17E 41-2509 displays its Olive Drab/Neutral Gray camouflage in about as good of condition as possible. The paint was very susceptible to staining, fading, and scuffing and, in fact, the footsteps of the people servicing the bomber can be clearly seen on the inner portions of the wing. The higher angle of the photograph also shows the black lines indicating wing walkways. National insignia is in four places and has the early red center that was soon replaced in order not to confuse it with the Japanese *hinomaru*. It was decided that this aircraft would stay Stateside and be utilized as a trainer. Accepted at Seattle on 13 January 1942, it then flew to McClellan Field for the latest combat updates prior to heading cross-country to Sebring, Florida, where it joined the 452nd School Squadron of the Combat Crew Training School at Hendrick Field on 3 February 1942. However, it was heavily damaged at that field on 16 May 1942. It appears it was repaired and then would serve with several other training units before being flown to Oxnard Field, Albuquerque, New Mexico, on 15 June 1945 for storage and eventual scrapping.



The type of work all airmen hated — members of the 92nd Bomb Group had been posed around a Fortress for a public information officer's photograph. These photos would then be sent to home newspapers and magazines and, fortunately, this image was taken in magnificent Kodachrome color. The aircraft is B-17F 41-24429 that was assigned to the 92nd's 341st Bomb Squadron at RAF Polebrook during August 1942.

The aircraft was originally named *Virgin Sturgeon* and was on the side of the nose where it was overpainted with a darker paint and the new name *Honey Chile II* applied. The 341st BS did not stay in England overly long and by 13 November of that year, the unit was at Maison Blanche, Algeria. On 10 January 1943, the aircraft was parked at Biskra Airfield (a major base for the 12th Air Force in the North African campaign) when the *Luftwaffe* decided to pay a visit. The bomber took a direct hit and burned out. Whatever useful was salvaged and the remainder of the airframe was abandoned.



The farmer would not be happy. B-17F 42-30157/OR*P *Hell's Belles/Dirty Gertie* was assigned to the 323rd Bomb Squadron, 91st Bomb Group, at RAF Bassingbourn. On 30 July 1943, the aircraft was taking part in a raid against Kassel when it was damaged by *Luftwaffe* fighters and *flak*. Limping back to England, the Flying Fortress was again attacked by fighters as it neared the English Channel. The hydraulics were shot out but the pilots made a safe landing at Bassingbourn. However, they were unable to stop the speeding bomber and it went off the runway and into a bordering farm field where the left main gear leg collapsed and the number two engine was completely ripped out of the wing. The ten crewmen escaped without injury and returned to service. The same could not be said for the Fortress. It was disassembled, moved back to the base, picked over for parts, and then scrapped. This view shows the early style national insignia with the red center portion painted out and the star toned down with a mixture of Insignia White/Neutral Gray paint. In one of those strange contradictions when it comes to military aircraft markings, the triangle identifier on the vertical tail was left in bright white. Presumably the farmer was paid for the damage to his crops.