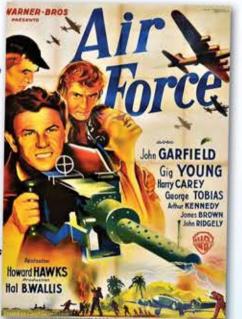




Cowls back on, the Wrights are run-up prior to the Fort departing for the next stage of its nation-wide tour. As can be seen, the wording MARY ANN — STAR OF "AIR FORCE" was added to the nose in Insignia Yellow paint. At each airfield where the bomber stopped, visitors could make a War Bond donation and tour the aircraft. This view shows the swivel mounts for the machine guns to advantage. It also appears that the Fort was given a new coat of paint. Over the years, there has been some speculation between aviation enthusiasts about the "exact" aircraft that portrayed Mary Ann. We went to B-17 expert Scott Thompson to get his thoughts. After watching the film several times, Scott concluded that the Fort known as Mary Ann is actually a modified B-17B rather than a B-17C or later B-17 variant as others have claimed. By stopping the film and examining individual frames, Scott (aviation historian Anthony J. Mireles did the same thing) offers a convincing argument stating the bomber is B-17B USAAC 38-584. Over the years, the story that the aircraft was sent into combat and lost has proven to be fiction. The bomber was written off in a crash on 17 October 1943.

Dramatic poster for WARNER-B Air Force, which was one of the top movies of 1943. Current reviewers have written that the film is a product of "toxic masculinity" but I am not sure what that really means. As noted in other captions, the threat of invasion was real, the hatred of Japanese was real, and the mounting death toll of young American males was very, very real. Reviewer **Bosley Crowther for** The New York Times wrote, "Air Force... is continuously fascinating, frequently thrilling and occasionally exalting.



In The Nation, reviewer James Agee gave a rather strange opinion. "The well-paid shamming of forms of violence and death which millions a day are meeting in fact seems of an order more dubious than the shamming of all other forms of human activity; so I cannot be sure how I feel about Air Force. It is loud, loose, sincere, violently masculine, and at times quite exciting." I have not watched Air Force in years — perhaps decades — but I now intend to do so in order to form my own opinion. I would invite readers to do the same and let me know your thoughts at moleary2challenge@gmail.com. Remember, we must consider the film during the time period in which it was made... and not by today's standards.