

# KING NINE WILL RETURN

MADE FAMOUS IN AN EPISODE OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE,  
THIS RARE B-25C IS SCHEDULED FOR RESTORATION  
BY BRUCE ORRISS AND STEVE WHITBY



A stunned Bob Cummings finds himself inexplicably transported to 1943 and the desert site of the crash of B-25C *King Nine*. The disassembled bomber was transported from Jack Hardwick's storage yard to a site at Edwards AFB for the five-day filming. The top rear turret was missing so Hardwick substituted a turret from a Martin PBM Mariner. The B-25C's actual serial was 42-32354 and studio artists changed the last number to 9 so it would fit in with the aircraft's name. As can be seen, the airframe was in very good condition.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** While preparing this story, I recalled watching *The Twilight Zone* when it first came out. I really enjoyed the science fiction twist to the programs featured in the series. Being an airplane fanatic at an early age, I also particularly liked "King Nine Will Not Return" and certainly had no idea that I would be associated with the actual aircraft decades later. I would be interested to hear from readers that watched this particular episode and to learn if it had any influence on their interest in aviation history. If you have any comments, please contact me at [moleary2challenge@gmail.com](mailto:moleary2challenge@gmail.com).

**R**od Serling was born in 1924 and grew up in the Jewish community of Binghamton, New York, where he enjoyed school and athletics. Of slight build and 5 feet 4 inches in height, Serling entered athletics and took a particular interest in history and the theater. As a young man, he watched the rise of the Nazis and became very absorbed by the politics of the period and this would influence his later work.

During the Second World War, Serling served in the US Army as a paratrooper and demolition specialist (his superior stated that Serling "didn't have the wits or aggressiveness required for combat") with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division, in the Pacific. He was wounded in the wrist and knee during combat and would be awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

He understood the necessity of war but would be haunted for the rest of his life by nightmares from that conflict. Only 30% of the original members of his

unit survived the war and he saw his best friend killed when he was hit by an air-dropped box of cargo.

After the war, Serling took up writing and was fascinated by the possibilities of television. After creating five major teleplays and gaining a strong reputation, Serling came up with the concept of *The Twilight Zone* as a television program that would combine elements of science fiction with then-current news topics. He also understood how television required the writer to condense maximum drama and emotion into a limited space and time (his older brother Robert was also a writer, specializing in aviation). He was also influenced by the short stories of the great American writers and putting all these elements together made *The Twilight*

*Zone* an instant hit and an American classic that still plays today on numerous streaming services. Running for five years, Serling would write nearly 100 episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, which was an incredible feat.

Serling always carefully read the news to search for any possible plot lines for *The Twilight Zone*. Earlier, one particularly story had caught his attention along with the attention of most people in the civilized world. Toward the end of 1958, a British Petroleum exploration crew discovered



Nose art for *King Nine*.